



MEMORABLE SERMONS

by

THOMAS K. BEECHER

BX  
7233  
B41  
v.1

CORNELL  
UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY



BOUGHT WITH THE INCOME  
OF THE SAGE ENDOWMENT  
FUND GIVEN IN 1891 BY  
HENRY WILLIAMS SAGE

Cornell University Library

**BX7233 .B41**

v.1

**Notable sermons.**



3 1924 029 457 318

olin



Cornell University  
Library

The original of this book is in  
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in  
the United States on the use of the text.

<http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924029457318>







**There was a man sent from God**





# NOTABLE SERMONS

BY  
THOMAS K. BEECHER

VOL. I.



PUBLISHED BY THE OSBORNE PRESS  
ELMIRA, NEW YORK

COPYRIGHT 1914  
BY  
FRANCES FARRAR

45279B  
73  
S

## Prefatory

*The following is from a pastoral sermon preached June 21, 1874, A.M., the twentieth anniversary of Mr. Beecher's pastorate. It is so characteristic of his spirit that it is a fitting preface for this, or any other selection of his sermons.*

I pine to see men, women, and children harmonized in social helpfulness and happiness. When you part from one another, and are distracted by fascinations that take you away and keep you strange, I ache. When you come together with dull, unloving eyes, or speak ungenerous words of one another, or show signs of pride because of wealth, or shame because of poverty, I hear a voice: "Not yet—not yet,"—and I wait.

As you enlarge your houses and beautify your homes, and grow toward luxury, I wait,—at the church center,—and long to see your society perfected as rapidly as your homes. How naturally we say "I, and mine." I wait that you may learn to say "we, and ours."

As the Israelites, in the old, old time, journeying out of Egypt toward Canaan, consuming the years with wanderings, builded a tabernacle, and set it at their center, and camped around it in hope of an inheritance, a fatherland, a city, and a temple;—so we pilgrims journeying toward the New Jerusalem

## PREFATORY

and the heavenly society, build here a tabernacle, and camp around it. One is your father, all ye are brethren. The father's house is roomy.

Come, brethren, let's practise the heavenly manners. Let's rehearse the anthems of the redeemed! Let us prove ourselves whether we have passed from death unto life by ascertaining that we do love and live for each other.

And while the air is full of portents heralding distress of nations; while in our own restless land contentions are ripening into hate, and society curdling into classes, let us come together,—not to celebrate sacraments and be frozen with fear in presence of mystic acts and stately ceremonies,—but to know and to care for one another, to shield one another, to rejoice together, and together weep.

Let us come together, no man claiming anything, no man counting aught that he has his own, sharing our gifts and graces, be the same what they may; and so watch out the night in comfortable hope, and be ready to answer when the Shepherd calls us in the morning.

## Contents

	<i>Page</i>
<i>MY BROTHER HENRY</i> - - - - -	3
<i>MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU</i> - - - - -	19
<i>ABRAHAM LINCOLN</i> - - - - -	33
<i>A VISION OF CREATION</i> - - - - -	51
<i>MIRACLES</i> - - - - -	67
<i>OUR WORK AS A CHURCH</i> - - - - -	83
<i>JESUS AND PAUL</i> - - - - -	93
<i>MEDITATIONS ON TREES</i> - - - - -	105
<i>PROHIBITION</i> - - - - -	123
<i>THE SHIPWRECK OF PAUL</i> - - - - -	145
<i>THE GREATEST MIRACLE OF HISTORY</i> - - - - -	159



# My Brother Henry

*Preached in*

*The Park Church, Elmira, N. Y., March 13, 1887. It was the Sunday following the death of Henry Ward Beecher.*



## MY BROTHER HENRY

*I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.*

*I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search.—Ps. 77: 5-6.*

You all know more about "Henry Ward Beecher" than I do, but I know more about "brother Henry" than you do.

A little Boston boy five years old had a brother Henry who was sixteen, and a brother Charles who was fourteen. And though he knew of Goliath who "fell down slam-bang," and David, "little David who ran up and cut his head off," and though he knew about Samson and the lion, yet for present strength and greatness, Henry and Charles were his heroes. Did they not own a long sled and coast down Copp's hill and jump sixteen sleds at a bounce? Did they not sharpen skates with enthusiasm, and go off to the mill-dam alone?

By night when the tocsin rang, and the little boy covered his head and shivered under the sheets, did not Henry and Charles rush down two flights of stairs and out of the door, yelling fire?

At prayers, family prayers, Henry and Charles could sing, and so could the little boy. A frail, blue-eyed, willowy mother sat in the rocking chair. Father

### NOTABLE SERMONS

would read—the little boy knew not what. For the singing from Village Hymns, Henry sometimes fluted, making a queer mouth; and then all kneeling, father ever prayed, “Overturn and overturn, till He whose right it is shall come and reign, King of nations and King of saints.”

Prayers over, Aunt Esther and the little boy, he standing in a chair, washed the dishes, and Henry and Charles stormed out to the Latin School.

Then they went away to Mt. Pleasant to fit for college. Their hair-trunk was two days a-packing, and the stage took them away before daylight, leaving the house so quiet and *so* empty! Sixteen and five—oh! how magnificent the boy of sixteen to the little boy of five!

Twice a year they came home,—at Thanksgiving and the summer vacation. The expected stage drove up, and the little boy in agony of delight that could not be endured, hid himself on a trundle-bed under mother’s, and braided bed-cords, till searched out, he was tossed above the clouds by great, strong brother Henry.

At morning prayer:—“Thou has brought back our boys in health;” the little boy heard that, and the “overturn and overturn” part; and that little boy, now your pastor, bears witness in your ears that the boys were guarded, and that since those days there have been overturnings not a few. And further, he tells you that those family prayers propagated the

## MY BROTHER HENRY

ancestral religion in brother Henry, though they have failed to hand down the ancestral theology.

The boys must go to college, and leave the little boy to go to infant school, to learn to tell the hour on a card clock, and to add, subtract, and count with an abacus. Henry was in the world of departed spirits, Amherst; Charles at Bowdoin. Every morning father prayed for our boys at college, "May they become good ministers of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Brother Edward, preaching at Park St. Church was no rival for Henry and Charles at college. Edward was a man, like father. But Henry and Charles were heroes, doing things. How they could jump! How they whirled around the horizontal bar! How Charles could flog a top! And Henry had peanuts, and red peppermints! Charles could whittle graceful boats, with sharp knife, out of pine sticks. Henry had the full set of Walter Scott's works. True, George had taught the little boy to sing and to say **the** instead of **ze**. But now he had gone to Groton to teach; and he wrote long letters about something; and he was going to preach like Edward. But Charles and Henry! Shall *I* ever be big and do things, and run to fires and go way down Milk Street?

Yes, one vacation day brother Henry took the little boy down on Milk street, past two Unitarian churches, safely past Tremont Theatre, past an open stable-door, where lay a red cow with monstrous horns, chewing her big mouth, with nothing in it, and looking oh, so strong and hungry at the little

## NOTABLE SERMONS

boy! But Henry wasn't scared. He was whistling. "Come along, Tom, that's only a cow!"

By and by father and eight of us were staging from Boston to Cincinnati, leaving my heroes at college. Amherst and Bowdoin loom large in my fancy still. My heroes were to stay and grow! Tidings once a month! Charles has a fiddle. Henry has a six-keyed flute. Charles and something about circles and Geometry. Henry and phrenology and temperance lectures.

By and by they, too, come west to study theology in Lane Seminary, a brick building in the woods of Ohio. There we heard the whistle of the quail, the scolding of squirrels, once the heavy, busky flight of wild turkey; (my hero killed one and claimed a second); the soft thump and pat of rabbit and the breezy rush of wild pigeon. Over the foot-path thro' the woods, came three times a day the heroes shouting,—exploding the vowel sounds, and imitating cows, frogs and crows—a laughing menagerie.

At the Academy of Music, two miles off down town, Henry was primo-basso, Charles violin and tenor, and the little boy, at last an alto, was permitted to run between the heroes and sing, while his eyes feasted on Charles' violin bow-hand and his ears were filled with Henry's basso. The Creation, and the Hallelujah chorus were our winter's work.

Henry was off sometimes, lecturing on temperance and phrenology. Sometimes on a Saturday morning, at family prayer, there were Catherine, George, Henry, Harriet, Isabella, Tom and Jim, Aunt

*MY BROTHER HENRY*

Esther and father—still praying “overturn and overturn.” After singing,

“Awake and sing the song  
Of Moses and the Lamb,  
Wake, every heart and every tongue  
To praise the Savior’s name.

Sing on your heavenly way,  
Ye ransomed sinners, sing,  
Sing on rejoicing every day,”—

they had long discussions lasting till past midnight, and resumed at every meal, of free agency, sovereignty, natural and moral ability, imputations, and so forth.

Charles took lessons on the violin of Tosso in the city. Henry wrote something that editor Chas. Hammond printed in the Cincinnati Gazette! Oh wonderful Henry! They both wrote long, long letters to two far away beings and the little boy sometimes took them to the Post-Office and paid 25 cents, wondering what they could find to write such long, long letters about.

George was by this time at Batavia, Clermont Co., preaching. To him and his marvelous flower-garden went Charles and his violin, to teach singing school; to them was sent little Tom, to study Geometry with Charles, and with him to live on Bell-flower apples, and dry brown-bread, and to ring the church bell that hung on trestles in the little church-room.

But the hero Henry was now at Lawrenceburg,

## NOTABLE SERMONS

and there was a revival! And he was married to a tall, blue-eyed, classic-featured woman, whom Tom first saw by the light of a brass lamp undoing her bonnet strings in the front entry, as she stooped to kiss the little fellow, while he thought, "She's almost as handsome as mother."

Here come in seven years. It was the little boy's turn to go away to school and college. He left father at home praying, "Remember our son in mercy, and bring him back to be a good minister of Jesus Christ." Henry had gone to Indianapolis, the capital, and was having a revival there. Members of the Legislature were "convinced of sin," and "indulging a hope!"

Then six years passed and brother Henry and his wife came three hundred miles to see Tom graduate; and brother Henry sat on the stage with him; and they rode back home in glory to Indianapolis, with its peaches, its grey squirrels, deer and turkey. There too, was Charles, a-playing Henry's organ, and helping on the revival work, in which as yet he took no stock.

Tom at home after a year of cavil and controversy during which he was far smarter than he has ever been since, used most easily to silence his old father in argument, and demonstrate the shadowy nothings on which the doctrines of the church are based—feeble superstitions!

Hearing of the great revival in Henry's church, he asked leave to go and see Henry and try logical con-

## MY BROTHER HENRY

clusions with him;—which the old father was prompt to grant,—writing long letters such as one physician writes to another when he transfers a patient, describing the highly critical state of Tom's mind and urging Henry to take him in hand,—“he's worth saving.”

All of which he proceeded to do. Tom and Henry sawed and split wood together; sat on rail fences and told stories; raised sweet potatoes weighing five pounds each; wrote articles for the “Farmer and Gardener;” banked up celery till it was nearly three feet tall, white and crisp; picked black-berries as big as my thumb; and hunted squirrels, rabbits, and smaller game. Tom went down to meeting every night for sixteen weeks, to laugh and sing and hear Henry talk about Jesus Christ.

I did not know it at the time. There were no arguments. Nothing was proved. Can you tell how the bones of the unborn babe grow in the womb? So Christ was formed in **C**onsciousness.

Like some white bird high-flying, that drops down through the smoke into a walled city fortified against all comers, carrying under its wing a message from afar, so came to me the vision of Christ, as with matchless words brother Henry told the story, without theology or dialectic. Or:—

As the germ of life in the walnut is shut in by double walls, the hull and the flinty shell, seemingly never to get out,—no man can break into it and set it free;—yet in soft decay the hull is dissolved, then

### NOTABLE SERMONS

frosts split the shell, and afterward sun and rain quicken the germ, which will grow through ages and become a great tree:—so the Christ formed in me, was shut in doubly by the hull of frolic and frivolity; and by the hard shell of intellectual pride and scientific attainment. But there came humiliations and sharp pangs of heart-break and loneliness; and lo! at Philadelphia there stood before the session of the Pine St. Presbyterian Church, a young man who told them, "I don't believe the Bible, but I do believe on Jesus Christ—Bible or no Bible."

That young man, no longer young, is now your pastor. And many have been the entreaties he has sent to brother Henry, "Come and preach Christ in the ear of Elmira."

In those days, '40—'46, brother Henry was a revivalist without methods, fanaticism, or sham. Lonely disciples throughout the state competed and begged for a meeting of the Synod of Indiana. It was an assembly of apostles. Its week was a pentecost. And brother Henry, astride his long-boned, fast-walking sorrel, with well-worn and ill-filled saddlebags, rode hundreds of miles, as courageous as Paul, as gentle as John. Fort Wayne, Logansport, Evansville, Terre-Haute, Crawfordsville, Madison—visit them now, and you shall find grey-haired old saints that will tell you, "I remember the blessed days when Henry Beecher and the Synod of Indiana came here!"

In 1846 I took service in Philadelphia. In May 1847, brother Henry came on from Brooklyn to the







*Henry Ward Beecher*

*Thomas K. Beecher*

## MY BROTHER HENRY

May anniversaries. His speech before the American Board electrified all who heard it. It was like the voice of Paul in Jerusalem telling of the wonderful things that God had wrought by his hands.

Once a month or oftener I was with him. His ministrations were crowded with perennial revival. His days began with a six o'clock prayer-meeting, and were consumed by conversations with inquirers who came to him for counsel.

The little old meeting-house of Dr. Cox was burned. They builded a tabernacle (wigwam) on Pierpont street, while Plymouth church, since so famous, was a-building.

And the Lord added daily unto the church of such as should be saved. The work of the Lord prospered greatly in the hands of "my brother Henry."

In 1838 or '39, in Philadelphia, quite a sum of money had come to him to relieve debts that distressed him. I see my hero still, grasping the roll of bills in his left hand, swallowing a lump in his throat, as he took off his hat, smoothed back his upturned forehead and ejaculated "Tom! I shall do something yet. I don't know what:—but I feel it in me." I was about thirteen years old, I was awed, and we walked toward Walnut and on to Main street in silence,—to me unforgetting silence.

In 1854 I fled away from New York and Brooklyn and "brother Henry," to Elmira, bringing with me no equipment but the single one, "I believe in Jesus the Christ of God." Since that time I have heard much,

## NOTABLE SERMONS

and know but little of Henry Ward Beecher; but not for a day has brother Henry failed to rise like a dream, commingling in memory with that willowy fair-faced being whom I called mother, and who fasted on my birthdays and prayed to God to give me a new heart.

You, I said, know more about "Henry Ward Beecher" than I do, but I know more about "brother Henry" than you do.

"Other foundation can no man lay than is laid: Jesus Christ. I believe that thou art the Christ, the son of the living God. And on this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against her."

On this rock I found brother Henry, like some vine of beauty and of strength, thriving, and flinging afar a vision of beauty, and the alluring fragrance of heart-rest, love and hope. I loved brother Henry, and climbing up to enjoy the vine, my feet found the rock. Blessed be the vine! Blessed be the rock!

For your sakes, beloved, I wish that I could be as brother Henry was.

Somehow I feel small interest in the current estimates of Henry Ward Beecher nor any inclination to add to them.

In those sad days when his good name was besmirched, and thousands of men took sides, brother Henry,—my brother Henry,—solemnly asseverated his innocence and his purity. Knowing him, I believed him and read no further.

I have heard of brother Henry—Henry Ward

## MY BROTHER HENRY

Beecher,—reformer, war trumpet, our champion in England, companion and counselor of Abraham Lincoln, lecturer in universal demand, advanced thinker, prolific writer, inexhaustible preacher, creed-destroyer, friend of freedom and of man. I have heard of ecclesiastical councils and their findings. And but yesterday I have seen the great city of his home saddened and still. Because he loved flowers, they bedded and buried him in flowers. Hebrews and Roman Catholics, Socialists, colored men, soldiers, sailors and longshoremen, editors and lawyers:—mankind in the city of his home paused and softly said, "I'm sorry."

Henry Ward Beecher believed in man and his destiny.

As the tides obey the sun and moon, so he held that the ways of men obey the eternal God—whom he loved.

Therefore he loved men, studied men, watched men, and labored to introduce men to what is best in themselves.

It is not for any man to fancy that he can lead his fellows except as he be led of God. He was a watch-man and, seeing the first turn of the tide, shouted discovery. Men thought him the cause of great movements. He never so esteemed himself. "The man that sees the streak in the east is not the cause of the sun-rise," he said.

He was wholesomely in tune with nature in all her moods, and with man as part of nature. He preached and he wrote on the beautiful theory that

## NOTABLE SERMONS

because God is great and good and loving, therefore man is not a failure and life is not tragic, nor eternity one long wail.

He cared as little for logic and consistency as an apple-tree that blossoms bountifully in the sunshine to the song of robins and blue-birds.

He was a magnificent success in every way. I cannot name a man that without office, authority, or organization of his fellow men to lift him up and throne him, has yet reached so high, been seen and known so far, and by his death thrills with regret so many thousands or even millions.

Was it Oliver Cromwell that rode through London 'mid the shouts of thousands, and said to his companions, "There would be twice as many if I were riding to the scaffold or the block!"

Julius Caesar, to whom was declared I know not how many triumphal receptions, died by a stab!

I mind me also of Jesus Christ, on Wednesday the people's hero, but on Friday dying alone in ignominy; and somehow I am not impressed by any verdict of "the people."

I turn from Henry Ward Beecher and rest with "brother Henry," who rode his long-gaited sorrel the length and breadth of Indiana to tell of Jesus Christ.

I almost hear the colloquy renewed in restful Paradise: "Henry, son of Lyman, lovest thou me?" "Thou knowest that I love thee." "Henry, son of Lyman, lovest thou me more than these thro' which

*MY BROTHER HENRY*

thou'st come?" "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

And a strange gladness comes to me, as I call to mind that the last pen-stroke by his hand and the last thrill of his music-making brain was in the service of "The Life of Jesus the Christ." I know not the book will be worth reading, but I do know that it was worth while to even try to write the unspeakable.

Jesus said of John, the great reformer unto whose preaching came forth Jerusalem and all Judea and Galilee and the ten cities: "Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he."

Brother Henry was a Christian believer.

"When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers."



# **My Peace I Give Unto You**

*Preached in*

*Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, May 15, 1852*

*Williamsburg, N. Y., June 15, 1853*

*Hartford, Conn., August 13, 1854*

*Elmira, N. Y., August 27, 1854*

*New Haven, Conn., April 8, 1855*

*Elmira, N. Y., August 12, 1855*

*Jacksonville, Ill., October 14, 1855*

*Chicago, Ill., June 15, 1862*

*Elmira, N. Y., March, 1866*

*Repeated by request, September 26, 1880*



## MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU

*My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth do I give to you.—John 14:27.*

*Ye are not of this world, but I have chosen you out of this world.—John 15:19.*

Jesus spoke these words to a very small and select number of men. They were men who had been for years his almost daily companions; they were, if I may so say, his family. Better than all others they knew and understood him. Their appreciation, meager as we know it to have been, was still the richest and most nearly true of any that Jesus found among men. But now he must leave them and die. By the words of the text, Jesus was, as it were, making his last will and testament. He leaves a legacy: "My peace I give unto you." Next he guards them from false expectations and disappointments, by telling them that this gift is not given in the way or after the sort which they would be apt to expect. "Not as the world giveth do I give to you." And lastly many times over during this and ensuing conversations, he teaches them that in every particular of personal experience, they are, and are to be, separate from and unlike the world; in brief, that in perpetuating his gospel in its spirit and deeds, they would verify and reproduce item by item his experience, both of joy and sadness, success and defeat.

## NOTABLE SERMONS

All this he told them beforehand, and then, after in so many words adopting them as friends and brothers, he prayed for them.

Historically we know that these men did verify these predictions, step by step. They drank of his cup, they were baptised with his baptism. In this discourse, however, I am to speak of a prophecy and promise made by Christ. I am to speak of peace, the peace which Christ gives to all that are like him, that is, to all that are Christians, in just the ratio of their likeness to him.

1. "My peace," says the text; something which Christ in particular experienced and enjoyed. Hence we will seek to detect its presence and quality by studying him.

2. Next I shall speak of it by contrast and description: appealing to our own experience and consequent knowledge of our own powers and their interplay.

Jesus was a man. Whoever has made himself truly familiar with his biography is prepared to find a peculiar result or reward to such a life. At a glance it is evident that none of the usual rewards, such as prosperity, fame, wealth, comfort, brilliant associations, power efficiency, attended upon Jesus. Nor could they. The tenor of his life seems to smite all these in the face. He was a man who lived contrary to received notions. His most intimate friends were disappointed daily and chid him often; and though they loved him, yet when at last he died, there was

*MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU*

not a living man to assert the wisdom of such a course of life,—not one. They put on the sackcloth of disappointment, and murmured lamentations to each other over their blasted hopes.

A life so peculiar must of necessity involve a peculiar reward, if any reward at all. Jesus was by no means a miserable man, even though he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He knew a reward daily, hourly. There are some sufferings which are in themselves a priceless reward. With all his sorrows thick upon him, Christ enjoyed despite them all—nay rather in consequence of them—a compensation such as this world can neither give nor take away. He was sorrowful but not miserable. You will find it hard to select a word by which to describe him in this regard. You shrink from saying, happy, joyful: equally from saying unhappy, joyless.. Calm and contented he certainly was not. Cottagers, simple-minded, with few hopes and fewer fears, are calm and contented. Christ was torn with longings unutterable, groaning in spirit; he was often weary and in tears. These are not symptoms of calmness or contentment. But the words, sad, disconsolate, despairing, describe him no better. Strong, self-reliant, courageous, fail just as fatally.

There stands the Judean Jesus,—an angel might envy him,—and yet not a word which the world uses to describe its estates whether of good or evil, harmonizes with him, unless it be his chosen word, peace. Study your own heart, scan closely the portraits of

### NOTABLE SERMONS

men that hang in memory's gallery, and tell me how many peace-full men you ever knew. And when you have called the little, scanty roll, answer, were they not all, every one, Christians?

A little while let us dwell upon this somewhat unusual contemplation, that is, the reward, the peculiar reward, which this man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, enjoyed even while he lived. This consideration subtracts not an iota from the quantity and quality of the suffering whose torment he keenly felt in body and soul. No tongue can tell the agony of his sorrow by whose stripes we are healed. Yet he, about to die, offers his peace as a most precious gift. Consider his life of humility, poverty, actual want: his death, prefaced with scourges, a crown of thorns, a weary, cross-burdened way, and in its last article received with exquisite torture. These were real agonies. A tithe of such upon us, and we should cry out for death, and esteem ourselves utterly miserable.

Consider, too, his inward sorrows, his natural fear and anxiety, for like us he was tempted; his knowledge of right, the pressure of temptation, the horror of a possible fall; his undying devotion to his divine mission as yet so unrewarded, so visionary, so useless; his large desires, never satisfied, yet upon which he was steadily thoughtful; his impending fate of defeat and death, which brooded over his chosen path. All these inward sorrows Jesus felt, yet there was a reward here. He was not broken, or moved to swerve or falter in a single step.

*MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU*

Consider also his social wrongs; for as men find their most exquisite happiness in society, so also their most exquisite torture comes from the same. He, so sweetly hungering for love, and patiently waiting for companions, met rude repulse on every side. His affections were wounded, his love rejected! Here was wrought an anguish of spirit that passes all comprehension. "Oh, Jerusalem! how have I loved and longed for thee!" Ye that can let his gracious life pass in rapid review before your memory, who can see his acts, hear his words, and almost gaze upon his face; ye that have known Christ, tell me, did ever teeming, mellow soil send forth its tender blades in spring more beautiful and thick-set than were the acts and words, and even silences of love with which his life was verdurous? Tell me, too, was ever early meadow so burnt with black frost, the life-sap in every tender blade of promise and beauty driven back rudely to the root,—as when Christ was scorned and buffeted by men, in all his loveliness rejected by the very ones he loved?

Oh, mother, smitten by the rude hand of thy ungrateful son, the blow all painless, so sharper is thy grief to have a thankless child! and thou, long-suffering wife, thrice bound unto thy fallen husband, by law, by sorrow, and by love; oh, faithful, unregarded love wherever found, such tears as thine Christ often wept: "I came unto mine own, but mine own received me not."

Yet there was reward even here. It must have

### NOTABLE SERMONS

been a soul of heavenly peace that could thus speak from out of desolation and the very shadow of death: "Father, forgive them." He endured the cross, despised the shame, for the joy that was set before him. And the brightness of this swift-coming joy and glory, where it met and mingled with the darkness of his present sorrow made the golden twilight, peace. There his soul rested.

There, too, our souls may rest, if we choose to take his aims, live his life, and reproduce his experience. This is the victory that overcometh the world. Except by experience, neither you nor I can learn the quality of peace. Let us muse upon the experiences we have had and waken, if possible, an appetite for the opposite. For to many of you the past suffices, and more than suffices to have walked as other men walk. If you are satisfied as you are, I have no message for you! Nor has Christ. He came not to the well and satisfied, but to the sick, and weary, and heavy-laden.

Peace is not an opiate quietude. It is the result of many commingling elements, the harmony of many feelings,—a harmony that would be joy if this were the kingdom of heaven; a harmony that is joy even now in every assembly of true Christians, in every true church. The joy of heaven shining through the atmosphere of earth is Christian peace.

Peace comes to the soul as the resultant of causes, not as a treasure snatched up like a diamond from the sand, or given from soul to soul as coin is given.

## MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU

When Christ gives it, he gives it as he does lilies and hyacinths in spring time, by sunshine and shower and fertile soil conspiring to reward the faithful gardener. When a worldly man grasps after it under any of its various names of competency, independence, stoicism, contentment, it is but a dissolving delusion that he gains. He chases hotly after it. But hot chases by their very heat preclude the possibility of ever attaining. As a boy might chase his shadow of a summer morning, hoping ere noon to lie down in it and keep cool, so they elude the pursuer. Hence it is instruction at once most needed and most beautiful that not as the world giveth does Christ give to them that are his. The weary man that has chased nine will o'the wisps would hardly be persuaded to give heed to a tenth, unless he could know that this time the manner of the chase, the length of the running would be somewhat different from that he has already tried. "Try another way," says Christ. "If you would receive my peace, try my way."

Let me attempt to make our musings still more definite. I have said that this peace is the resultant of many antecedent things, the legitimate, the inevitable result of plans and purposes which may or may not have had this peaceful attainment, as their end.

Each act of righteousness, each self-denying act, each act of love, brings with it not only its reward of success, but also a constitutional reward; just as violins, flutes, and organs, not only yield satisfactory

### NOTABLE SERMONS

music, but are themselves improved by the melody they make. This principle was true of Christ, and if we dare try it, will prove true of us also.

All our powers are exercised at the risk of suffering, the intensity of which is accurately measured by the nobleness of the powers exercised. To be wounded and thwarted in benevolent aspirations is keener pain than to be choked off and disappointed in money-getting. But it is the law of our being, as it was of Christ's, that when our noblest powers are habitually exercised, no matter what be the immediate result, success or failure,—there comes sooner or later an exquisite satisfaction and reward in the very soul; as music by night to tired watchers; nay, as angels came to Christ after the temptation. This principle is not a fact of metaphysics alone. A farmer, whether or not he reap a full harvest as the desired reward of his labor, yet does invariably receive a farmer's health, strength, appetite, and sleep; gifts in themselves so precious that many an invalid is glad to take them as his sole aim. So, too, a man of science who computes a comet's orbit, or watches for years the silent stars, or knocks patiently at every door of nature's arcana, shall find a quickened intellect and intelligence almost God-like; even though he miscalculate the comet, or die at the closed doors of nature's mysteries, as Abraham died, not having received the promise. There is always a reward, which, even in the tightest hug of disaster, gives breath and roomy comfort to a man who has worthily exercised his powers. Indeed

## MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU

to a thoughtful mind this constitutional reward will seem very soon to be the only thing worth the seeking, so uncertain are all the others, and so uniform the law of defeat and disappointment in this world. Our present life will seem to him but as those long and costly trial trips which English steamships make to test their boilers, braces, and best ballast trim. All the good the voyage does is to get the ship ready for numberless voyages of pleasure and profit hereafter. So the ship goes, hither and thither, with seeming earnestness and aim, but really none. If anything breaks, it is not much matter; they went out to break things, and they have troops of help at hand to repair. All the good of the voyage is in the ship and to the ship. Such is man on the voyage of life, training his powers, developing strength under temptation, finding out his weak points, and being made perfect through suffering. "Herein do I exercise myself, to have a conscience avoid of offence. Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; for the trial of your faith worketh patience, patience, endurance, and endurance, hope. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice. Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ."

Christ's peace was light in darkness. He was like a bird of sweet song caught in a tempest, hurried hither and thither in the whirl, never having time to

### NOTABLE SERMONS

sing out one entire carol of beauty, till at last thrown out upon purer, brighter scenes, the whole, pent-up melody gushes forth in triumph; as even now the love of Christ outflows amid the adoration of those who in heaven are like him. But meantime, to know that such music is possible, to utter faintly now and then a note, to have such divine imaginings, such affluent purposes of enduring love, and such radiancy of hope,—in sort, to be like Christ, nay, even to want to be like Christ,—is in itself a wealth to the soul. The world is care-full to find peace; the Christian is careless, and finds it. Peter asks: "Who is he that can harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?" And Christ said: "These things I have spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And so can you. No man can try to be consistent in the same principle of self-denial, and universal love, without finding very soon in his own fevered soul that Christ does give his peace to his followers, and in a way the world never dreams of trying. As certain as that water, rippling along over pebbles, will gurgle happily all day and all night long: so certain is it that whatever soul of man, allured and helped by Christ, will burst the bonds of cautious self-love, and give himself away to God and man, will hear perpetual murmurs of sweetness deep within his spirit, and know the peace of God that passeth understanding.

Did you ever try the experiment?

*MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU*

This is the whole matter: our souls are fevered with unsatisfied wishes, desires,—lusts, the Bible calls them. We superficial doctors, keep saying, “drink, drink, drink.” And the more we drink, the worse the water tastes and the hotter the fever. Now comes Christ, and prescribes “abstinence, abstinence, abstinence. Deny yourself. It will come hard. But by and by you will know my peace, and come into your right mind.”

The world proposes to gratify you. Christ proposes to cure you.

My hearers, this is the gospel. It is good tidings of great joy. It is peace on earth, and glory to and with God.



# Abraham Lincoln

*Sermon preached at The Park Church, Elmira, N. Y.,  
Sunday, April 16, 1865, three days after the assassi-  
nation of Lincoln.*



## ABRAHAM LINCOLN

*We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done.—Luke 23:21.*

You know why I have taken this text, for not more sad than we were they who mourned the loss of their leader, slain on Friday, 1800 years ago. And their sadness was not unlike ours. They knew not Christ and the nature of his kingdom. They knew only Jesus, his recent triumphant entry, and his worthiness to inherit the throne of David in Jerusalem, ruling over Israel in restored independence. But when their expectation was highest, there came the stunning blow. Jesus, their hope, was slain. They talked of nothing else these three days, and the essence of their sorrow was, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel."

For two weeks, we and all the people have been glad with victories and triumph. And on Friday, called "Good Friday," there assembled a vast multitude on the ruins of Fort Sumter, to raise again the very flag which had been there first assailed by hot rebels. Words of victory and hope have been spoken. But at evening, he whom the nation leaned upon was slain. And now on Easter Sunday, we are sad-hearted, for we trusted that Abraham Lincoln had been he

## NOTABLE SERMONS

which should have redeemed our institutions and given us peace.

Christian brethren and good citizens all, is there not a resurrection that may come to us, as many as have manhood to see, understand, believe, and act?

The president recommends the humbling of ourselves before God, the conduct of services in memory of the good man murdered, that we recall his virtues, and yield ourselves to a profitable sorrow.

As good citizens and humble Christians, let us endeavor to be guided by his recommendations, and in earnestness think upon the good man gone, contemplate his virtues, indulge a wholesome sorrow, and learn to walk in true humility before God and among men.

From my soul, I congratulate thee, Abraham Lincoln, upon thy discharge and honorable retirement from earthly labors. For thou wast burdened and very weary. How heavy thy load was, we knew not till it fell upon us, and we began to ask who can carry it, as children who miss a mother or a father. May thy resting be as thy labors, and thy refreshment with thy Savior satisfy thee that thou hast not lived in vain.

God rest thee, Abraham Lincoln!

You have read the history of Israel led by Moses; of the Dutch republic, led by William of Orange; of the French Revolution under Mirabeau; of the English under Cromwell; of the Americans under Washington; and you, having thus read, do know,—for they all teach the same lesson,—that the leadership

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN

of a great people through perils of disorganization is a task that surpasses human ability.

Of all such tasks ever given to a ruler, the care and leadership of the American people during the last four years has been unquestionably the greatest; the territory so vast, surpassing the empires of history; the people so various, surpassing in effective variety the nations subjected by Rome; the habits and passions, the plans and purposes of the people as discordant and confused as nature and tradition could make them. But one single tie of agreement there was, which indeed was a torpedo rather than a tie,—namely, love of freedom for one's self, and a determination to have one's own way despite all contradictions. This vast, proud, discordant people, educated by eighty-four Julys, seventeen presidential elections, and eighty years of prosperity, to boastfulness, self-conceit, and headstrong will;—this vast people called Abraham Lincoln to be their ruler, and charged him to preserve the constitution and execute the laws: a constitution already far decayed by reason of disregardance, and laws already habitually set at naught wherever public opinion was not suited by them.

Well might the honest man feel feeble, and call for the prayers of the good, as he left his home to take, not the direction of a ship, which, though so great and driven by fierce winds, is yet turned about by a very small helm, but the leadership of a people, wilful and impatient of contradiction.

And yet this man of the people had a profound

### NOTABLE SERMONS

faith in the people. He walked by this faith and accounted himself their servant. And like the sober servant of a drunken master, he spoke gently, respectfully, and waited for time to bring a right mind, an end to violence and raving. In common with thousands, he looked to see the aroused heat pass off with election day, and inauguration.

At Columbus he said, soothingly: "It is a good thing that there is nothing more than anxiety, for there is nothing going wrong,—there is nothing that really hurts anybody. We entertain different views upon political questions. But nobody is suffering anything. All we want is time, patience, and a reliance upon that God who has never forsaken his people."

At Pittsburg he said: "My advice is to keep cool. Let the people on both sides keep their self-possession, and just as other clouds have cleared away in due time, so will this great nation prosper as heretofore."

At Philadelphia, standing in old Independence Hall, he said: "I have often inquired of myself what great principle or idea it was that has kept this union so long together. It was, I think, that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but, I hope, to the world for all future time."

And he says in his inaugural,—which I pray you all to read once more that you may see how honestly and consistently this man has kept his faith steadfast

*ABRAHAM LINCOLN*

to the end;—"I shall take care that the laws of the Union shall be faithfully executed in all the states. Doing this, which I deem to be only a duty on my part, I shall perfectly perform it as far as is practicable, unless my rightful master, the American people, shall withhold the power, or in some authoritative manner direct the contrary."

You remember how his heart yearned and at the last hour overflowed with eloquence, as he penned the paragraph the like of which no ruler ever spake before, or state-paper ever preserved: "We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic cords of memory stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when touched again, as they surely will be, by the better angels of our nature."

With this clear and cool, yet hopeful and fatherly confidence in the people, our president began his work.

And as of old some conspicuous criminal was brought into the forum and laid at center; while to arms and legs four prancing horses were harnessed one to each and then headed to the four quarters of the empire to run furiously: so our president found himself at Washington, the feeble center, tugged at by sectional fury in every direction.

Every lawyer, every office-holder, every preacher

## NOTABLE SERMONS

in the land knew just what ought to be done. Massachusetts was not less hot and certain than South Carolina. New York was at issue with Kentucky. Pennsylvania and Missouri were far apart. In short the whole blessed people, the president's accepted masters, were in a clamor: "Let something be done right quickly." And our president waited to find what.

"Oh, how slow he is!"

Christian citizens, history will record of Abraham Lincoln this as his chief distinction: that believing in the right and ability of the people to order their own affairs, he was patient of their clamor but miraculously quick to note their agreements and be guided by them.

Of the four years that he has led us, I will not speak in much detail. Ere many months had passed, all began to see that a greater work was on hand than any man could measure. Forces were at play which no man could control. Issues multiplied. In the army began to be felt the rivalry of ambitious officers in every degree. In the south colored men and women began to hang around forts and camps to be fed or die. In foreign lands lay ambushed sharp-eyed conspirators to improve any and every blunder or rashness, to our ruin. In cities north and south civil suits began to obstruct prompt military activity. Upon the ocean were pirates, we called them, but other nations called them privateers men. We won prisoners, rebels, but we lost soldiers; and we dared not

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN

punish because we shuddered at retaliation. Slaves brought information to our armies and food to our prisoners escaping homeward, but the people were not ready to call them freemen and citizens. Plots that never came to your ears have gone far toward ripeness, and then been quietly nipped.

Committees from New England have gone to expostulate with our President for his course, and have met Kentucky committees equally afflicted for opposite reasons. Wall Street has run to Washington several times to impress sound views in finance upon the President. Assemblies and conferences of clergy have brought up their unanimous votes and laid them before him. Friends of starving prisoners have called upon him to do something, and that right speedily. In short the whole land has been clamoring its wants and its opinions, its injuries and its demands; and for four years Abraham Lincoln has sat in the very focus of all the noise, good-natured and listening. I think he has not spoken a hasty word. And he has heard any unity of popular demand a little sooner than the people could hear it themselves. Not one step backward has he ever made. And if you will lay the inaugural of 1865 side by side with that of 1861, you will see that the same fatherly heart and cool head is author of them both. He vowed before heaven to preserve the nation, and whoever else may have failed, he did not fail.

Added to his cares of state have come sickness to himself and bereavement to his household; while all

## NOTABLE SERMONS

around his southern horizon has brooded a sullen malignity of personal hate which no patience or magnanimity of his has been able to scatter.

That he was fair-minded, just, and honorable, is certified in that he was abused by extremists on both sides of every question issued.

That he was clear-headed and strong-hearted, is certified in that to this day our terrible war has not drifted into side issues.

His last great act was to say through Lieutenant-General Grant to the defeated armies of Virginia: "Lay down your arms, and go home, and be quiet. Let there be peace and order."

And so, as Moses stopped at his Jordan while the people went over to possess, Abraham Lincoln has led us to the borders of a peaceful land and we go forward to possess it, but he is with his God.

Say I not well that of all cares ever laid upon a ruler, the leadership of the American people during the last four years has been unquestionably the greatest? Nor do we any wrong, nor show unmanliness, when with aching hearts we say one to another as we walk and are sad: "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel."

But not altogether of our loss shall we speak together if we speak wisely.

Abraham Lincoln, dying, does not remove the great people of whom he aimed to make himself the agent and executor. The experiment of popular government is still in progress. Where the people rule,

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN

no one man imports much. President Lincoln felt this. No man could rate his personal consequence to mankind at less worth than he himself would have fixed. And the moment the first shock is over, we shall see that the same question is still at issue: Can a free people preserve their own government?

Harrison and Taylor, in peaceful times, have died, and their lieutenants have come into place without any jar. Can a free people do as much when the air is electric with intense passion, and every pulse is at fever rate? Have we gained wisdom which we so much need, that we may abjure the sins and follies which have cost us so much in the past? Have we learned that the tongue of a reviler setteth on fire the course of nature and is set on fire of hell? Oh men, now while our hearts are sad and tender, I ask you: Are there not words of yours about Abraham Lincoln which you do now regret? Has there not been a boyish wilfulness and certitude of speech which made the work of government harder?

Last Sunday I read a hasty proclamation for thanksgiving. I did so against my will, for I felt that the rejoicing of the people was premature, thin, boyish. When Richmond was evacuated, when the army of Virginia surrendered and gladness was everywhere, I was sad, for it was in so many cases unprincipled gladness, the crow of a fighting cock victorious. I think of the temper and behavior of the people at large amid present astounding circumstances; will they, can they, act reasonably? Will Elijah's mantle

## NOTABLE SERMONS

fall upon Elisha, and the moderation of Abraham Lincoln regulate Andrew Johnson?

The death of President Lincoln ought not to change the temper of any man toward the southern people. With the fall of Richmond, and the surrender of Lee, there began to be spoken words of true dignity and Christian forgiveness. The assassination of the President ought not to change your feelings and opinions on any question. The murderer is a man and but one man. The only lesson to be drawn from this fatal success is this, that presidents need body-guards. Alas for democracy! which must needs learn by experience that body-guards are not merely the pomp of royalty, but the wise and proper security of him who wields the magistrate's sword.

This lesson, then, is all that the murder teaches us. But I fear that many will feel out blindly some new and implacable wrath against southern men. Not so would our fatherly president exhort you. "Keep cool," he would say. "Southerners are proved neither better nor worse by that pistol-shot of a mad-man." And if we were settling as one man into purposes of magnanimity and amnesty before we lost our father, surely we should even more sacredly carry out his policy, now that he is gone from us.

As to Andrew Johnson, upon whom so suddenly fall the cares of state;—remember that he too is a man of the people. In the hour of garrulity, he poured out his convictions in the maudlin speech of drunkenness. That is passed now. Andrew Johnson,

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN

sober and repentant, Andrew Johnson by the coffin of Abraham Lincoln, is another man from Andy Johnson the partisan from Tennessee, flushed with political strife and victory. And as we in days by-gone have prayed for and followed Abraham Lincoln, the people's president, so let us pray for and follow Andrew Johnson, a president from the people.

Indeed but that we loved Abraham Lincoln, we should hardly miss him. He was but one man; and no man is very important in this world's movements. But when a nation's heart is given to one man, when at least 15,000,000 people have a restful respect for honest old Abe Lincoln, the loss when he is taken cannot be measured. It is a true bereavement.

When such sorrows come into a household, they often elevate and purify the lives of the mourning ones. And so after some sort may not we approach and attain a higher and nobler standard of character, because of the stunning blow and bereavement we pass through?

Of many, let me select and set forth two or three surpassing virtues of our president that we may be quickened toward the same.

First, the depth and unaffected outgo of his affections. Abraham Lincoln loved, and was not ashamed to say so. In his first inaugural was the first intrusion of heart into state papers. It burst in. He could not withhold himself. Professors of rhetoric regretted the blemish; diplomats smiled at the simplicity; enemies laughed derisively. But all over our

### NOTABLE SERMONS

land the fountain leaped in good men's hearts, as they read these last extemporised words of a president,—not ashamed to be like God, and let his love be without dissimulation.

We remember his grief for Colonel Ellsworth, whose death shocked the nation. Alas, what an army have since followed the lead of this boy colonel, loved by the President!

At Fortress Monroe, in that hour of deepest gloom and disaster, when the President was receiving messages of the conflict every hour, he sat in cheerless quarters, and toward evening to his acting military secretary, "Colonel," he said, "have you ever felt that the dead are yet by us? My Willie is always in my mind. Have you a Shakespeare?" And he read from "King John" the words of Constance, when her son was prisoner, and from her separate and gone. They came in a trialogue, King Philip, Pandulph, and Constance speaking.

**Constance:** Father Cardinal, I have heard you say  
That we shall see and know our friends in heaven.  
If that be true, I shall see my boy again.  
For since the birth of Cain, the first male child,  
To him that did but yesterday suspire,  
There was not such a gracious creature born.  
But now will canker sorrow eat my bud,  
And chase the native beauty from his cheek,  
And he will look as hollow as a ghost,  
And so he'll die; and rising so again,

*ABRAHAM LINCOLN*

When I shall meet him in the court of Heaven,  
I shall not know him; therefore never, never  
Must I behold my pretty Arthur more.

**Pandulf:** You hold too heinous a respect of grief.

**Constance:** He talks to me that never had a son.

**Philip:** You are as fond of grief as of your child.

**Constance:** Grief fills the room-up of my absent-  
child,

Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,  
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,  
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,  
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form.  
Thus have I reason to be fond of grief.

There amid the rack and bedlam of a vast and undecided military movement, among rude men, the jingle of spurs, the clatter of sabres, the noise of wagons and gallop of horses, the raining in of telegrams, the conflict of counsels, the fears of the timid, the threats of the disappointed and the bluster of the bold:—sat our president in a little eddy of transient silence, and thought him of his boy, and spoke of it. He was stronger as a man for that he loved, and did not care to hide it.

Second, another striking virtue of Abraham Lincoln was his ability to recognize and respect the opinions of men who hated him, men who were his enemies; and as to himself ever discriminating between Abraham Lincoln the man, and Abraham Lincoln the president. As a man, he never put himself above any fellow-man, was never dogmatic. As a president, he

## NOTABLE SERMONS

never sought to gratify or assert with official power his personal convictions. For instance, he never disguised his dislike of slavery, his desire that all men should be free. But he never became an anti-slavery president.

There never yet was a visitor who came to see him but went away impressed that he was understood. We all need this rare quality. Look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others. Every one felt toward Lincoln: "He understands me and respects me. If he differs from me, it is, as he thinks, for a good reason."

But time fails me. I would gladly speak of his humor and story-telling, as illustrating a virtue that we should emulate. Mirth is a peace-maker when it is mirth from an honest, loving heart. And peace-makers are the children of God. He who remembers the skill of Jesus Christ as a popular teacher, because of his parables, will scarcely less admire the power of Mr. Lincoln's stories. I will say no more except this: if it pleases God to give you his indwelling spirit, and being thus a child of grace, you would ask for graces more abundant, I know of no one more desirable than good-natured humor, loving wit, logical story-telling. You shall have power among men to persuade, to amuse, to attract, and, please God, to lead them by your good-natured graces to love him who makes you good-natured.

Already, citizens, the rush of events has almost effaced the dimple in the tide where Lincoln sank.

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Already Joshua leads the host toward the river, leaving Moses in the mountain with his God. Already we study each day's news to read what is, and ask what's next.

Our soldiers are coming home. Are you ready to make room for them? Our southern states, collapsed, lie in a cold sweat, and warm life must be poured through their veins. Our colossal debt looms up like a mountain, and we are talking about digging it down with pick and shovel of industry. Millions of emancipated slaves are on the soil, and what to do with them causes good men to differ. Already long-headed politicians are adjusting issues for the people to foam and fight about. The end is not yet. The end never comes till Christ brings it in the new heaven and the new earth. And we have drawn aside today to recall our great man gone, our leader laid low, our father slain. Our meditations are ended, and their profit should begin.

Not in vain doth any man die who dying leaves his fellows wiser, because more thoughtful men.

Abraham Lincoln,	God rest thee!
Andrew Johnson,	God guide thee!
Brethren all,	God save us!

Amen.



# A Vision of Creation

*Preached in*

*The Park Church, Elmira, N. Y., September 18, 1874*

*Repeated September 26, 1875*

*Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y., November 24, 1877*

*Repeated in Elmira November 21, 1880*

*Gleason Health Resort, Elmira, July, 10, 1887*



## A VISION OF CREATION

*Through faith we understand that the worlds were formed by the word of God.—Heb. 11:3.*

We have many books of history and we know the names of them: Bancroft's United States, Macauley's England, Hallam's Middle Ages, Prescott's Peru and Mexico. We might speak of them as being books of Bancroft, books of Macauley, and so on, and be well understood. In like manner we have certain books of our Bible called the historic books of Moses. We have Moses not only as a law-giver, but Moses as a historian as well.

Modern writers of history usually annex to their books a list of the authorities and original documents consulted. Their story is a "mosaic," a skilful putting together of ascertained facts so as to make a continuous narrative. A historian does not make his facts. A historian does not vouch for the truthfulness of his witnesses. He examines them, listens to their testimony, compares one with another, and gives the best results that he can attain to. He states nothing of his own knowledge. Historians with one consent must say as the apostle Paul did, "That which I have received, that also delivered I unto you."

We have in the books of Moses a history, but unlike modern histories, he has not attached to them a list of authorities, nor a statement of documents con-

## NOTABLE SERMONS

sulted. Upon these questions we are left altogether in the dark. Did God tell him all these facts while he was in the fastnesses of Sinai? Did Moses discover these truths while he was a theological student in the temples of old Egypt? Did he find and decipher these facts written on copper or on skins, and handed down from Abraham as we hand down heirlooms? How did Moses get at his history? Who knows? Who can tell? If nobody knows and nobody can tell, what harm is there in guessing?

Scholars are pretty well agreed that Moses the historian, when he tells of events previous to his own day, depends upon at least two or more documents or traditions. He makes extracts from them. These extracts sometimes overlap like the shingles of a house, so that the same story is told twice: as we find for instance in the first and second chapters of Genesis, the second chapter telling in part of events more perfectly told already in the first; while as touching the creation of man, the story in the second chapter is more in detail than the story in the first.

Who was the author of these old documents or traditions? Answer: we do not know. But in the nature of the case, who alone is able, or could ever have been able, to tell of the five days of creation previous to the creation of man? Who was there in the beginning with God? Who can declare his mighty works except he himself declare them?

It must needs be that the story of the creation, if it be at all trustworthy, must have originated with

## *A VISION OF CREATION*

God himself. The next question is, in what way did he make his revelation. Sometimes God has caused words to be spoken, as to the little boy Samuel in the temple; at other times he has filled men with the spirit of prophecy and caused them to speak words not their own; at other times still he has visited men by dreams in sleep; at other times he has raptured men, as he did the apostle Paul, caught them up into the third heaven to see and hear; at other times still he has granted visions as to Peter on the house-top or to John in Patmos.

Of these various ways in which God has revealed wonderful facts to men, I "guess" that the story of the creation came to man in a vision. The words describe a picture, a panorama. The man who wrote or spoke them describes what he saw, or thought he saw.

Just so John the apostle describes what he saw and heard when he was in the spirit on the Lord's day. Putting into words what he saw in his trance, he gives us the last book of the Bible, with its wondrous sights and sounds.

The Bible opens with a vision of what went before and closes with a vision of what is to come after, the world as it now is.

The story of creation may have passed before Adam in the Garden, prior to his transgression and fall. Perhaps it came to Seth who began to call on the Lord, perhaps to Enoch, who walked with God. Perhaps it came to Abraham after his act of faith, or to Jacob at Beth-el, or to Moses in Midian. I'm sure I

### NOTABLE SERMONS

don't know who first saw the vision or told the story.  
But:—

To whomsoever the vision came, it came in six acts or steps, or days; perhaps in six successive hours; perhaps in six successive nights. The time was long enough to imprint the scene upon the memory of the seer. When he reduces his vision to words, he describes not *The Creation*, but *A Vision of the Creation*.

Our late civil war lasted four years. In each year there were, let us say for illustration's sake, six marked and critical events, now of victory and now of defeat. There comes to this city a traveling entertainment called, "Pictures of the War." There are twenty-four pictures of the war. We throng the Opera House. The room is darkened, and beginning with Fort Sumter, the beginning and the end of that scene is the first day or period of the war. Then comes Bull Run and we look at it, fix it in memory, and so ends the second day or vision, step or scene, of the war. So we go on until we have seen the whole twenty-four in their order. We look at our watches, and find that the war lasted just an hour. We say to the showman, with indignation; "Do you mean to say, sir, that our great war was fought through in an hour?" To which he replies: "These are only pictures of the war. It takes but an hour to show the pictures, and to hear what I have to tell you, but the war itself was another matter. Between my first picture and my second was six months, between

## A VISION OF CREATION

my second and my third, three months. I have showed you in an hour that which it took four weary years of blood and agony to bring to pass."

In like manner we have in the first chapter of Genesis, successive scenes, or rather descriptions of scenes. A man, living I know not when, was in the spirit on a day of the Lord's choosing. And as the apostle John saw on one Sabbath day the panorama of ages to come, so this unknown man, servant of God that he was, saw the panorama of ages bygone. We must therefore always read the book of Revelation, and the first chapter of Genesis as being an account of a vision which a certain man beheld and preserved for our instruction.

To make my meaning plainer, and to give you what I suppose to be a true impression from these earlier chapters of Genesis, I have thought to take the place of the seer myself, and, as if I had been that chosen medium of revelation, tell you the story of creation over again as it was enrolled in successive pictures before my eyes. Thus I shall be writing a second book of Genesis, differing from the first in this only, that I shall borrow my facts from the first book of Genesis, and all adornments of these facts will be guesses, and embroideries, my fancyings.

---

Sleepless I tossed from side to side while the night wore slowly by, in my home by the ocean. The rumble and rush of the surf wearied me. I got up to

### NOTABLE SERMONS

escape the intolerable restlessness. I went down on the hard white sand by the sea. I walked along the oscillating margin of the waters, I breathed deep the cool air from the ocean, and was quieted, rested. I walked and thought, and thought and spoke. I considered the heavens, the work of God's hands, the earth which he had made, and the stars to whom he gave their places. I considered the waves, rushing yet never overstepping their bounds, I looked at the old moon in the east paling at the coming of the sun.

(Scene First) A ghostly grayness overspread the land and sea, a strange unreality as if all things were about to be dissolved; a wildness, a dreaminess, seemed to possess all things, and me with them. I wondered if they did exist. I wondered at the sea. I wondered at the shore. I questioned the stars. I wondered at myself. What are they? What are these? What am I? Whence came they? Whence came I? I washed my face, I cooled my head, and came back to common sense, yet my deep questionings remained.

The enchantment of the hour returned, and whether in the body or out of the body I know not, whether awake or asleep I cannot tell, but through the whole arch of heaven the enclosed space seemed filled with sounds that were not words, yet they tided meaning in upon my spirit:—"In the beginning or ever the world was, before the mountains were brought forth, from everlasting to everlasting, I AM GOD. The heavens declare my glory,

## A VISION OF CREATION

the firmament my handiwork. Day unto day but speaks of me. Night unto night declares my power and shows forth my splendor." And after the sound there was silence and there was space, and I alone remained. No more land. No more sea. No more twinkling stars, nor paling moon, nor rising sun. Beside me nothing. Around me darkness, emptiness. I felt that I was stationary, yet fancied myself rushing like a falling star. Where was I? How know or how answer where there is naught to start from, and naught to measure by? I alone in silence and in space.

The darkness began to lighten, redden, glow. Commandment seemed to fill all space. Words without voice, resistless as fate, seemed to start the glowing particles: "Light is coming. Let light be!" Warmer and warmer grew a presence breathing on every side. With the warmth came rosiness, shining. More than I could bear grew the heat. I shot through it as fishes dart through water. Vast spaces, up or down, I stabbed like a rocket in my flight, but everywhere was stir, and light, and strange, resistless motion. Escape I could not, and with an outcry I awoke. So the first scene began and ended.

I stood up dizzy, walked a few steps, dashed water in my face, and turned land-ward. How far I walked, I cannot tell, nor whether 'twas in sleep or rapture that I fell.

(Scene Second) I seemed extricated and set far off at one side of the rush and whirl, the heat and

## NOTABLE SERMONS

light. I saw the glowing in the distance as one sees clouds that change their shapes, driven of winds, and far away. I knew not where I was, but this I saw, that the rosy mists grew denser, brighter. They curdled into flakes, incandescent, shooting forth vast shafts of light like spurts of slag from underneath the heavy hammer of the forgerman. The dazzle I could not look upon, so bright it was! One and another of these glowing flakes rushing seemed to roll, and rolling rounded, and rounding seemed to spin away one by one till they were lost in the shining haze that gave them birth. Some were large, and some were small. Some seemed white with heat, and some seemed dark and red, or even colorless. As music, and processions bearing banners, draw near, pass by, and go out of sight; so these volleying suns and satellites I saw come into being, pass glowing by me and disappear. Thus began and ended the second vision of that strange night by the sea, and I awoke.

I had fallen on the sand. Clouds hid the moon and darkened all the east. This I knew in a moment or two of consciousness. I heard also, and recognized the swash and rumble of the surf. Helpless I fell away again.

(Scene Third) In the body or out of it I know not, but I seemed to have fled after and to have overtaken the retreating worlds whose creation I had seen but now, and down into the steaming atmosphere of one I dropped. The waters around me fled away. Down they rolled from the mountains round about,

## A VISION OF CREATION

roaring and foaming. Carrying all before them, they hurried down into the valleys, unto the place appointed. As great whales rise suddenly from the deep, while cataracts pour down on every side of their hugeness, so the mountains and the highlands came up from underneath the water, and their sides were cut into ribs and channels by a thousand rivers. A strange, auroral light pervaded everything. Vapors still hugged the steaming earth. If, borne away by the wind, they lifted long enough for me to look around and see the waters and dry land, they soon returned and brooded all things with their warmth and dampness. Death itself with such solicitation must needs have come to life, and hugely sprouted unto growth. But there was no death. On the contrary, here was the teeming womb of very life. All things came to pass and took on growth as in an instant;—grass and herbs, tall reeds, and ferns that unrolled themselves an acre to a leaf. All things vegetable grew up, filled their measure, and gave their substance to the roots of greater things thereafter. The verdure overgrew me, and struggling with the tangle, I awoke. The beginning and the ending, the morning and the evening, of that strange scene, was the third vision that overtook me that wild night by the sea.

As I awoke, stripes of crimson and orange, white and blue were flung out like pennants all along the eastern sky. I could see through the moon into the blue beyond it. My eyes were held a moment by the

### NOTABLE SERMONS

sight, forever new, of sunrise, but the sleep or some high rapturing power snatched me again from consciousness.

(Scene Fourth) The vapors lifted and were rolled up before the wind into dark, frowning, impenetrable masses. Opposed to them were higher piles of vapors that were as the glistening sun for brightness. Through their broadening rift I looked into the deep blue heaven. As I looked, the sun himself seemed to come forth in majesty. The darkness of the one mass took on splendor, and the brightness of the other put on a veil. The sun shone supreme.

(Scene Fifth) As I looked, the waters parted, little fish leaped forth, and other things so monstrous that I could not call them fish. Leviathans stretched their vast length along the water and slowly turned themselves to feel for, if not to see, the sun. Croakings from swamps that had been voiceless hitherto, came upon the air. The reeds parted to give way to enormous alligators. Winged lizards came through the taller ferns, flapping heavy wings laborious. Great birds came wading out; serpents showed themselves and seemed the longer because of what they did not show. As a city pours forth its population to some fete-day's fireworks, so from sea and swamp, from intervale and table-land, from grass and high-grown trees, from caves and crannies, things great and small came trooping forth to see the new-born sun, the late-come glory. At evening when the sun declined, another seemed to rise, and sharper shadows

## A VISION OF CREATION

thrown westward turned the sleepy eyes of all things toward the rising moon. Like to other suns and moons not yet grown, the stars appeared.

I awakened. Long time had I lain there. The birds had sung their morning songs. The cattle had gone afield to their scanty pasture. The risen sun was new to me as if I had seen him for the first time. Sounds of birds and beasts came to my ears melodiously, reminding me of their beginnings. With unsteady steps I started toward my home. Men and women came toward me, familiar faces, and voices of surprise and reproach: "Where have you been? What have you done? You are wild! You are sick!"

They reached out their arms and caught me as I fell; and again, whether I was in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell.

(Scene Sixth) The rankness of the weeds and grass was softened down to velvet. The trees stood apart, touching and kissing at their branch-tips, and parting to let the sunshine through. Vines climbed up the great trees, shrubs shot up, blossomed, fruited, and wondered what they were for. Little creatures, squirrels, rabbits, field-mice; larger ones, the antelope and deer; larger still, the lion, tiger, and unwieldy elephant,—walked peacefully around the garden and wondered what they waited for and why they lived. Four ways the sparkling rivulets ran down the hill that was the high place in the garden;—a pedestal that lacked its image, a throne that lacked its king. Strangely drawn, the birds and beasts small and

### NOTABLE SERMONS

great, were tending thitherward, and I with them. That same compelling voice that spoke not, yet was heard by every living thing, that voice that came to me so often in visions of that night, seemed speaking once again: "All these are beautiful. All these are perfect. Pictures are they of what I have known from everlasting to everlasting. But there is no center. Come, I will set among these creatures of my hand one who shall be to them as God. And I will give him company." As it was spoken, so it was. I saw upon the garden-throne both man and woman in state, for the first and last time royal and innocent. That which otherwheres has since been simulated, there took place. The garden and all that lived therein knew the coming of the master. They thronged around the throne, looked upon him, and he called them all by name. They went their ways and knew their service. He knew his care, to keep and dress and beautify and rule o'er all. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them. And God rested from all his work which he had created. So I understood my visions.

---

After this sort, my friends, in some far-off age, some man of God, living near the fountain-head of innocence and inspiration, received, I doubt not, a vision of creation, each vision a sample snatched from the very heart of its age. He saw things that marked the energy of God, to whom a thousand years are as one day. He measured as it were one step of

### *A VISION OF CREATION*

God's stately pacings. Waking from his vision, he told his story in his scant language, as I have told to you in mine, the best he could. Perhaps among the heirlooms in the house of Abraham was the short record which Moses has transcribed and given to us as the first chapter of Genesis. I know not whence it came, but I am certified by the spirit of God that it is true; and when slow science has crept along the base of all things and measured miles by inches and eternity by seconds; and at last has laboriously mapped and mastered the secrets of history as they are written in the vestiges of creation: it shall be then found that the toiling industry of the ages has merely verified the truth of what our children learned long ago;—what Adam told to Enoch; what Enoch told to Noah; what Noah told to Abraham; how that the heavens and the earth were created of God, how in six magnificent visions the story was made known to man, and how God rested from his works, and rules in the armies of heaven as man should do; and as man will do when, redeemed, he sits on the right hand of God with Jesus Christ the first-born, according to the prophecy of the Gospel which looks forward and predicts, as clearly as Genesis looks back and tells of the beginning.



PARTS OF TWO SERMONS ON

## Miracles

*First one preached in*

*The Park Church, Elmira, N. Y., January 31, 1864*

*Second one preached in*

*Ely Hall, Elmira, February, 12, 1865*

*Repeated in The Park Church October 13, 1867, and  
April 11, 1880*



## MIRACLES

*And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.—Matt. 13:58*

A recent and very able French writer has compiled a life of Jesus, according to the last and highest requisitions of critical, historic, and physical science. I refer, of course, to Renan's "Life of Jesus." In his introduction or preface to the biography proper, he gives emphasis to the simple truth declared by our text: as if men of science and reason had after long and patient research, established the fact that miracles occur only in times and places and among people who believe in miracles. Says he: "Observation, never once contradicted, teaches us that miracles occur only in periods and countries in which they are believed in, and before persons disposed to believe in them!"

"He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." The Bible, a book of miracles and itself a miracle, is beforehand with these patient observers. So let it be. Miracles occur only among people inclined to believe them. To unbelievers the mighty works of God come not.

Therefore, it is argued, such credulous observers are not competent witnesses as to facts. Their testimony is worthless because they were ready to be-

## NOTABLE SERMONS

lieve the thing they certify. In the words of M. Renan, "No miracle was ever performed before an assembly of men capable of establishing the miraculous character of the act." "A supernatural relation cannot be accepted as such: it always implies imposture, or credulity, or both. The duty of the historian is to interpret it."

These conclusions have been very happily termed by Mr. Greeley, "the bigotry of science." The times have changed. Once science in her feeble infancy was oppressed by the bigotry of churches. Now we find reason and science tending toward retaliation and equal bigotry.

The supernatural and spiritual gifts of the church today are very feeble. The direct power of God working in and through men is hardly prayed for or expected. And these days of spiritual weakness are well-chosen by men of science to visit upon the church a scepticism and denunciation which in former days the church poured out upon infant science.

Religious teachers have, I think, invited this serious assault upon Scripture and supernaturalism by an over boastful line of mistaken argument. Military men sometimes find that they have fortified the wrong position. When the assault comes, they sometimes perceive their error, and gain strength by evacuating the defenses upon which they had expended much toil.

Religious teachers, or, if you please, champions, have in days bygone, challenged and made possible

## MIRACLES

the assaults of science by what I think an untenable defense of supernaturalism.

The error has been this: to attempt to defend and propagate religious truths by scientific methods and processes. I remember to have learned at college, and to have heard repeatedly since from my brothers in the ministry, that there is and can be no way of attesting the will of God to men except by miraculous works such as no man can do except God be with him. So they say, the word of God is proved by miracles. He that believeth shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned.

Thus as a railway engine working through deep snow-drifts, puts a snow-plow ahead, to push aside all opposition; so these miracles have been put ahead of the church and pushed with energy, if not with wisdom.

This is the fatal mistake. Miracles may overwhelm all beholders and compel belief. They do so astound that they enforce conviction. But for this very reason,—that they are so astonishing,—it becomes nearly or quite impossible so to certify and attest them that after ages will credit them. Eye-witnesses feel the power of miracles, but with the greatest difficulty can they make others feel it. Here then is a discrimination which religious champions have failed to make; that is, the value of miracles to eye-witnesses and contemporaries, and their steadily-lessening value as evidence to minds at a far remove from the events.

## NOTABLE SERMONS

A monstrous event overwhelms a man like an avalanche. But a monstrous event needs itself monstrous certification. Miracles break down under ordinary testimony and so cease to be what they once were, convincers, and become the very opposite, causes of unbelief.

I am grieved to find how extensively this pious error of religious teachers has laid the church and the Scriptures open to successful assault. Every man who hears me knows that the hardest parts of Scripture to accept are these very miracles, which are mistakenly put forward as the coulter of the Bible plow, to rip up unbelief and compel obedience. Speaking for myself only, and not for my brethren, I am willing to evacuate that defense. I give up that line of argument entirely.

If, as our text says, Christ did not many mighty works there because of unbelief, so that he used miracles least where unbelief was strongest, I shall not attempt to convince unbelievers 1900 years afterward by using weapons which Christ disused at the time. If Jesus wrought no miracles to compel belief, I surely will not boast of miracles as the foundation of belief.

While conceding thus much to the honest demands of science and reason, I am far from conceding the falsity of the Scripture record; far from calling all stories of miracles mere legends. In short, while giving up the mistaken bigotry of church champions, I am not ready to accept the equal bigotry of ration-

## MIRACLES

alists and men of science. On the contrary, every year adds intensity to my spiritual and intellectual conviction of the truth of Scripture, and the actuality of miracles and supernaturalism.

Return now to our text: He did not many miracles because of unbelief. Restate the text in the language of the French doctor: "Miracles occur only in countries and periods which believe in them." What follows? Surely it is a long stride to infer that all narratives of miracles must be set down as legends!

Grant that before any miracle is wrought, the people must believe in the possibility of it and be expecting it; grant that only the credulous can see wonders and mighty works: what follows? That they are untrustworthy witnesses, answer the doctors.

Admit that too.

Now it is my turn. Is incredulity any better than credulity? Admit that round-eyed, open-mouthed wonder-seekers are poor observers and poor witnesses. Are their opposites any better?

One man opens his mouth and swallows gravel-stones with his oysters. Another pinches his lips tight against everything that cannot force its way in! Of the two I prefer the man with the big mouth and the easy swallow. He will be, on the whole, best fed.

Men of science, when they approach a question of miracles, begin by suspecting; and guarding against all knavery and collusion, they make artificial conditions, they multiply differences, they require repeated

### NOTABLE SERMONS

experiments. In short they prejudge the case quite as fatally by their incredulity, as common folk by their credulity.

Now observe. At whatsoever time God may purpose confounding men by his resistless will, he can do so in spite of all scepticism. Build your altar, lay on wood, slay your bullock: pour on water, float the wood and flood the trenches: but if God please he can cause his fire to consume the offering and lick up the water, and his wrath to chase down the sensuous critics that denied his power. Whenever, therefore, God undertakes to do mighty works in spite of men, I have no doubt he will succeed in face of all scientific precautions.

But such was not the spirit of the works of Christ as recorded in the New Testament.

The Gospel is an adventure of grace and condescension in which God proposes to work with and for and in men to do of his own good pleasure. He stands at the door and knocks. He sojourns with men and is touched with sympathy. He suggests and promises renovation of spirit, contentment, health, peace. He lays by the crown and sceptre, and is found in fashion a man. He utters no decree. He thunders no denunciation. He simply invites: "Come unto Me." And as this incarnate God fares up and down the land, there proceed from him at times certain emanations of grace and healing, naturally as fragrance from a flower or song from a bird. He bade the people not to talk about them. He set small store

## MIRACLES

by them himself. But he unfolded a spiritual and religious scheme: if you do thus and so, my disciples, you will experience thus and so. Such and such signs will follow them that believe. Such and such works ye will do.

Now I protest that common sense teaches every man who undertakes to try an experiment, to accept the conditions laid down by his teacher before he pronounces judgment upon that teacher.

Here stands Jesus Christ avowing: "I don't belong to this world. I am not aiming to carry on research, to extend the domain of science, or the luxuries of civilization. I am the Son of God and of Man. I found an invisible kingdom. I appeal not to sense but to faith." It is absurd though unconscious bigotry, for men of reason and science to stand forth and say, in effect: Change all your professions, work with our tools, submit to our tests, or we will brand you visionary, and your disciples fools!

Christ never pretended that he would raise some Lazarus from the dissecting-table, after his veins were blue with arsenic, to show the doctors his power. Jesus Christ never bragged his miracles. That error belongs to the blundering defenders of Christianity. Peter and John never pretended that they could go to some theatre, and after a committee of citizens had chosen a notorious cripple and fenced him round with sceptical suspicion, heal him by a word. Oh, men of science, can ye never believe in God unless he jerks your galvanometers! May not the father of angels

## NOTABLE SERMONS

and of men lay his hand at will upon his children to bless them? And if he comes nearest to them who do most love him, does that shock your science?

I am perfectly free to grant that I cannot stop the mouths of sceptics by reading miraculous stories to them. But I am not ready to grant that the gracious ways and works and words of Christ, whenever they transcend our sensuous experience and materialistic science, are to be set down as the legendary fancies of weak-minded disciples. I urge any and every mature and fair-minded person to read the "Life of Jesus," as presented by Dr. Renan, and notice how excessively difficult he finds it to explain away in any plausible manner the supernatural occurrences narrated by the evangelists.

The modest miracles of the New Testament are in keeping. There is an artistic unity between them and the actors of whom they are predicated. A man of science can reject the entire history, but he will find it very difficult to reject portions of it and construct an expurgated story that will not show the painful twists and ingenious contraints to which he is compelled to resort.

You have often been urged by me to cultivate your senses, your reason, and heap up wealth of science. But at the same time remember that there are experimental truths of human experience that transcend science. There are passions in man, there are hopes and fears, there are emotions, over which reason has as yet no control. There are facts of experience

## MIRACLES

which science cannot classify and account for. As if God had reserved to himself avenues of approach to the imprisoned soul, and modes of communication that are not of the earth. We have the testimonies swarming up from all history.

---

[From a sacramental sermon touching upon the same subject.]

*If that evil servant shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken, the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, in an hour that he is not aware of.—Matt. 24:48.*

Brethren, we are this day those very servants, some of whom say, "The Lord delayeth his coming," and we are liable to be swept away from our only hope, the power and coming of our Lord Jesus. And more than you suspect are our own hearts growing incredulous, saying, "Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they always have done."

Men of science have a sober, plausible way of talking about the end of the world. "We are not to expect any sudden convulsions of the globe." Geologists have proved the slow and sure motions of the earth's crust, the rise and fall of continents, the ebb and flow of oceans. Astronomers have figured out cycles and periodic motions so vast that they are ready to insure a million or two of years to old earth.

### NOTABLE SERMONS

Chemists have ascertained the laws of composition and recomposition, and assure us that matter is indestructible. Historians have noted the rise and fall of nations, and learned philosophers have detected the come and go of ideas among men. There's nothing new. By and by men drift toward a sort of fatalism. They count themselves passengers in a vast rolling ship; seasick,—the ship rolls; homesick,—the ship rolls; sporting,—the ship rolls; sleeping,—she rolls; dying,—she rolls. Resistless law and regularity everywhere. She always has rolled; she always will roll.

In this short sermon I aim to relieve the minds of the thoughtful and intelligent among you who are troubled by the tendencies of science, and the plausible feeling that things always will be as they always have been. Let me state your difficulty and perhaps remove it.

You cannot make it seem probable that God ever has interfered or ever will interfere to break or change the order of nature, and bring this present world to an end. You find it difficult to credit the miracles of past ages, and more difficult still to expect the convulsions of the future. You see, or at least hope for, a very slow but sure progress of mankind to an exalted destiny. To any such I say: You must think further, or else not so far. Having outgrown blind and childish faith, you must go on to a manly, intelligent faith.

You do not doubt the existence of a personal and powerful God. Nay, you see him in his works and

## MIRACLES

adore him as the architect of Nature. And because he has framed this world so perfectly, with such harmonious laws, you can conceive no better. God has not done so much, merely to throw it aside as a worn-out garment, you say; it is incredible that this world is to be destroyed and another created!

There is power in this argument. It can be majestically heaped up till it overwhelms us. But there is a fallacy, too. Grant that for countless ages all things have continued as they were from creation. Grant that every new discovery harmonizes seeming irregularities. Grant that a pious imagination can conceive no better order, nor any reason to change this. Does it follow that the resources of God are exhausted? Is the versatility of God henceforth to be cramped by his own machinery? Has he, like telegrapher Morse, made one invention and exhausted himself? A boy sits and for a full half-hour draws what he will on his slate, rubs it out, and draws again. Has God drawn his picture and gone to sleep? A superlative picture! For thousands of years men have studied it and found new points at each inspection. Will God create no more?

"But all things continue. God works by law. What has been, will be. There's nothing new under the sun." Very good. Does regularity and fixed habit take away from you the power to change? For twenty years you have attended to your store. Punctual and incessant you have been. They say you took a run to Saratoga once, another to Illinois once. I

### NOTABLE SERMONS

saw a man who said he saw your store closed at noon. But I don't believe any such marvelous stories. For observation teaches me that you live and work by rule. I heard that you intended selling out, quitting business, and going to the country. "Nonsense," said I. "He never has quit. He's been regular for twenty years. He's a methodic man. I could set my watch by his movements. He'll never change!"

Such incredulity on my part is simply absurd. Now they do say that the operations of nature have been at times suspended. A man dead three days was called to life again. There was a voice heard out of heaven, and a great blaze of light. Once some water was changed to wine. "Nonsense," says the man of science. "I've been watching nature a thousand years, and she's as regular as a clock. Anything out of the usual way is incredible."

That is, my brother, no man can live and work by rule so long and so wisely but you admit that he can, when he will, be irregular, and do sudden, unexpected things. Yes, he can give up one life, and begin an entirely new one. But God, when he gets a-going, can't or won't stop. He builds an engine, lays his rails, leaps on board, pulls wide open the throttle of his omnipotence, and henceforth is a run-away; and any man is a fool who believes that he ever has stopped, or ever will stop for any purpose whatsoever. In short: you know in your soul that you do what you

## MIRACLES

please. But God can't, or at least won't, do as he pleases. You are a free agent. God is not.

My brethren, think soberly clear through this subject and you will see that this scientific scepticism is in fact simple atheism. It exalts law above the law-giver. And I am sure that any devotee, however superstitious, has a better sense of God and honors him more than you when you say that miracles are incredible. The day when I begin to explain away miracles and doubt God's glorious appearing hereafter, I shall make a clean sweep altogether and account myself a mere passenger on the train of fate. I'll listen to the dead grinding of nature's laws, and when my turn comes, drop under the wheels and be no more. If I believe in God at all, it shall be in a God at least as great and free as my own soul. You shall not scare me by your geologic ages. God needs not hurry. You shall not unsettle me by your regular laws. When I please, I let my watch run down. So may God. You shall not trip my hope by the millions of years that astronomy figures up. God shall outlive them, and when he pleases, will create a new heaven and a new earth.

Happy is he who has been so led through this life that he needs and seeks and finds the power of our Lord's coming.

Are you an invalid, useless henceforth in life, unable to take an energetic part in labor or pleasure? Remember that our Lord at his coming shall change this

## NOTABLE SERMONS

our vile body and fashion it according to his glorious body.

Are you a slave to lust and appetite? Are you every day cast down by the power of the flesh which you find contrary to the spirit? Be not destroyed. Thank God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ and the promise of his coming, to be the Savior of his people from their sins.

Are you grieved by the falsehood and childishness of men, disheartened by your disappointments in those you loved and trusted? Jesus at his coming shall assort mankind as a shepherd that divideth his sheep from the goats.

Are you afflicted in that you, a Christian, are so little Christ-like, though so long a professor of him? Remember the promise of his coming. Persevere in hope. In this life only, you have not your hopes in Christ.

Do larger cares oppress you? Are you grieved and disgusted with church government, and states? Have patience, brethren, unto the coming of our Lord who alone has right to reign. Be subject to the powers that be for the Lord's sake. In due time your loyalty shall have a worthy object and a prosperous outflow, for Christ shall be king.

# Our Work as a Church

MR. BEECHER'S IDEAL

*Preached in*

*The Park Church, Elmira, N. Y., July, 1872*



## OUR WORK AS A CHURCH

[From a sermon preached in May, 1872, before the present building of The Park Church in Elmira was erected.]

To know with certainty that one is a redeemed and growing Christian, and thus a son of God, is surely a great good. There are many tests by which men are wont to prove themselves, and they are good tests as far as they go. Have I felt and confessed my sins? Have I repented? Have I trusted myself to God in Christ? Have I been baptised? Do I penitently yet hopefully receive the Lord's supper? Do I read the Bible? Do I pray daily? Do I attend upon church meetings? Do I hold fast the catholic faith? Am I true to my household as parent or child, brother or sister? Am I industrious, clean-mouthed, contented? Am I just in my dealings, and generous according to my ability?

These and similar questions are valuable tests of piety. But such questions of one's self, and examination of one's habits, will never bring to pass an assurance of health and hope. With most men they wear out sooner or later; for slow-growing character does not bear frequent examination. The would-be Christian is left dissatisfied and dull, behaving respectably according to the church standards, and hoping that he was truly converted "under the preaching of Rev. Mr. Revival." To a few humble and sensitive souls these

### NOTABLE SERMONS

questions may easily bring a diseased conscience, self-condemnation, melancholy, semi-insanity.

But there is a better way of testing ourselves.

In a modern watch-factory, the eighty or hundred pieces called for each watch are made by as many different workmen in different parts of a great building, each man doing his best to perfect his piece. But it often happens that faults which no skill can detect in the pieces when examined one by one, show themselves plainly when the pieces are assembled, one or more of each kind, and set up in a watch. The supreme test of perfect workmanship in each and every part, is the accurate performance of the watch as a whole. Each workman in such a factory may say: Hereby I know that my blank bits of metal have passed from shapelessness to use, because they work well in a watch. So every Christian believer, striving to become perfect as God is perfect, if he finds himself working smoothly and lovingly in society, may say: "Hereby I know that I have passed from death unto life, because I do love the brethren."

Now, every watch-factory has its light and bright and clean assembly-room; and every church needs its assembly-room, in which Christian may come near to Christian, and prove himself, whether he have passed from death unto life.

An assembly-room, I say—not merely a room for song, or worship, and preaching. Sworn enemies can go to church, and sit in pews to hear song and prayer and preaching, and even take part in the same; yet

## OUR WORK AS A CHURCH

they are not assembled. Going to church proves nothing one way or the other, as to the love one bears toward his brother.

The church must provide a home to which men, women, and children shall come, and come together; come into personal relation so intimate that each one will feel, I like the folks, or, I don't like the folks. Hereby we may know that we have passed from death unto life, if we like the folks.

The Christian church is an experiment in socialism. Three hundred people convinced of sin, and confessing the same; three hundred people finding pardon, and hope through Jesus Christ; three hundred people asking day by day for the guidance and indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God; three hundred people called to be saints, and expecting to be members of one family, with one father,—God; three hundred such people come together, saying: "I count not myself to have attained; I am not yet perfect; I would like to see how far the work of grace has gone in me; so then, let us meet often and intimately; let us form a society together. Let us see whether the rich can love the poor, and not feel them a burden. Let us see whether the so-called refined and the unrefined, can find some common bond. Let us see whether the aversions of race and caste are somewhat mitigated in us. Let us see whether people with different sorts of clothes can come together and be happy. Let us see whether smart people and foolish people can associate. Let us see whether we can love other people's

### NOTABLE SERMONS

children besides our own. Let us see whether we can enjoy paying the price of other people's happiness, which is one of the chief pleasures in the kingdom of heaven,—paying the price of other people's salvation. We admire it when we see Christ doing it, and Peter doing it, and all the martyrs. Suppose we do it, then; for we shall never have the pulse of God's life throbbing in our arteries until we begin to act like God. Let us see whether we can help one another to escape the snare and temptation which come through fear of poverty. Let us see whether we can help one another to habits of accurate speech and polite manners. Let us see whether we can make our children happy in fellowships and sports that are without taint of envy or sin. Let us see whether we can make a home for the widow and the fatherless, and the penitent outcast. In a word, let us see whether we have passed from death unto life by finding out whether we do in any practical way love the brethren."

When I used to propose any of these things to my brethren of established churches in New-England, they would say, "Why, you will have a 'row' in your church every day in the year." "Very good," I replied, "there will be a worse 'row' at the judgment-day, a remediless one; too late, alas! they will then discover that brethren can not dwell together in unity. If the demonstration must come that all my people are deceived, I would rather have it come now, today, when there is possibility of repentance, than quiet or please them by some holy sham, until they shall be astonish-

## OUR WORK AS A CHURCH

ed to find that, though they have said, 'Lord, Lord,' all their lifetime, yet the Lord never knew them—they never loved the brethren."

It is no doubt true that unsanctified or half-sanctified people, when brought together in an experiment of Christian socialism, (I love this word despite some of its associations) have usually bred heat and hatreds. But what of it? I hope better things of you,—things that make for peace and true piety. For see:—

Because of these heats and hatreds engendered in churches whenever the endeavor has been made to handle any practical question of money, morals, or manners, the endeavor has been for two centuries to rule out such questions, and beseech church members not to think or talk about such things, but to follow the things that make for peace. Instead of which, I should say the better exhortation would have been: Aren't you ashamed of yourselves? Have you not reason to doubt your own calling and election if you can not talk about such things without quarreling? You don't run well. Would you not better give up any thing and every thing, and learn to love each other upon that very point where now you have collisions and frictions? Is it your impression that the communion of saints is a society where there shall be no difference of opinion, no apparent collision of interests?

Suppose I put five hundred square-cornered bits of marble into a revolving barrel for the purpose of rounding them, and making them into toy marbles,

## NOTABLE SERMONS

the delight of our boys. At the first turn of the barrel, each unshapen little block gets a blow. They make outcry from within, saying: "Let us out! Let us out!" I lift the lid, and inquire what is the matter. And with unanimity they say: "We can't agree." "Very well," I reply, "then I'll shut you in until you can agree; for that is the very purpose for which you were put in there."

This preserving of church unity by banishing all live questions of personal interest from the church-home has gone on for so many years, that in this land the remedy for all collisions has come to be divorce or schism. And instead of making men and women ready for the perfect unity that is at last to be achieved in the church of Christ, we have been offering premiums to angularity and willfulness, declaring that freedom is better than society, and liberty better than love. Hence our churches have degenerated, and have become, in the main, organizations for the maintenance of choirs and speakers. Brethren, I certify you that a Christian church worthy of the name is more than a company of men and women who agree to listen to the speeches of some man, and to sit together in quadrangular pews, without noise or tumult. Except as a church furnishes preparation for, and opportunity of, a more perfect and intimate association and fellowship of its members, it does not deserve the name of a Christian church.

I am not only willing to peril the existence of a church by multiplying the relations and interests by

## JESUS AND PAUL

which our natural selfishness will be irritated, but I believe and would teach that any amount of wealth and costly endeavor is wisely used, if by it a demonstration is flashed in the faces of all concerned that they have never found true religion. I would count five hundred thousand dollars wisely invested in a costly apparatus of social experiment, if by trying the experiment I could show you before it is too late that you have not learned the first principles of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. For if we or any that call themselves Christian are not by our religious experience prepared for more and more intimate relations here upon earth, I know no good ground for hoping that we shall be ready for the communion of the saints on high.

I fear that there are thousands who find in religion only a disguised form of self-love. They serve God through fear of hell and hope of heaven. But you serve God that you may grow into his likeness; that you may make the heaven; that you may find it among you. For, as Jesus taught, the kingdom of heaven is "among you," if it is anywhere. Our English says it is within you; but he in his Greek said it is among you. Now, I would bring you together, and see if it is among you.

I set before you, then, as part of the dividend we are to receive from our investment in church buildings, the means of testing in a satisfactory way our own personal piety. By the buildings and common property that we shall bring together under one roof,

### NOTABLE SERMONS

and enjoy as one family, I expect to make you see one of four things: Either (1) that you do <sup>not</sup> care for society, in which case, of course, you do not care for the kingdom of heaven; or (2) that you can not or will not fit yourself to society, but require that society shall fit itself to you, in which case I shall ask you, Do you expect that the Lord will fit heaven to suit you, or you heaven? or (3) that you can not be a member of society without feeling and causing friction, heat, unrest, and perhaps schism, in which case I shall say, If you can not love the brethren now, what reason have you to suppose you ever will? or (4), if as I hope we all ascend together to a higher plane of comprehension and Christian love, we will sit together in the heavenlike places of our new home, and feel sure of our acceptance with God hereafter, because by his grace we have learned to dwell in love today; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God. Thus it seems to me our proposed enterprise sustains a very intimate relation to our personal piety and final salvation, and this is a great good.

# Jesus and Paul

*Preached in*

*The Park Church, Elmira, N. Y., April 12, 1885*

*Repeated January 25, 1891*

*Reformatory, Elmira, April 3, 1887*

*Gleason Health Resort, June 9, 1887*

*Buffalo, N. Y., November 17, 1889*

*Port Jervis, N. Y., December 21, 1891*

*Wellsburg, N. Y., June 14, 1891*

*Cornell Y. M. C. A., Ithaca, N. Y., Jan. 17, 1892*



## JESUS AND PAUL

This discourse was heard by some of you in April six years ago. I bring it to you again, hoping to increase your interest in the career and writings of this most remarkable Christian, I might say the only Christian who has been endowed to add light to the path first traced by Jesus the Christ. Follow either one and you shall find the other.

The first article of a Christian's faith might read:— I believe that the Son of God became a man in order that men may become sons of God. God in Christ came down, that man in Christ may grow up. Jesus said, "Follow me," again and again. Paul has written again and again: "I beseech you be ye followers of me." "Be ye followers of me, as I also of Christ." "Be followers together of me, and mark them that walk so as ye have us for an example." Such words seem immodest, sound presumptuous. Who is this man that he should bid his fellowmen "Follow me!" Yet if it may please the spirit of God to own the teaching of this hour, the offense against modesty and good taste will fade from our attention, as we perceive that the descent of God in Christ and the ascent of Paul by Christ, trace the same shining path of life. Or, to change the illustration: in limestone caves of Kentucky and Virginia,—Mammoth and Luray,—the visitor is attracted by columns, snowy-white, broad-based yet slender, and reaching

## NOTABLE SERMONS

up till lost in darkness. He sees not only these finished columns, but others like them yet in process of formation. There are stalactites like icicles, slender, shapely, white, that hang from the dome above, and drip, drip. On the floor beneath hit by every drop, lies the stalagmite, spattered and earth-stained, but whitening as it rises to meet the stalactite that hangs above and gives it growth and quality. The axis of the one agrees with the axis of the other. By and by they will join into one pillar. He who comes to one will find the other, for their axes agree. That I may be found in him, says Paul. To live is Christ.

Stalactite Jesus;  
Stalagmite Paul.

Or as when a water spout is forming, the sailor notes that the cloud reaches down like the trunk of an elephant, while the troubled water below, not disobedient to the heavenly call, reaches up a little restless mound. By and by the two are joined. The mound is raptured, caught up, and the watery column moves on mile after mile, mysterious and majestic.

So when the believer, troubled, lifts his little unstable mound of aspiration, the down-reach from above overpasses all the distance; and the established Christian moves over restless waters obeying laws and influences mysterious and majestic. As Paul describes it: "The life I lead no longer after the flesh or the will of man, but to the will of God."

Thus by prolonged illustration I seek to make thinkable the coming down of Jesus the Christ, and

## *JESUS AND PAUL*

the growing up of Paul. Jesus was the son of God, in fashion a man; Paul was a son of man, growing up into God. Understand either, and you will find the other.

In no mean city, Tarsus by name, a boy was born one day. Jesus was yet a boy in Nazareth, helping his mother, and learning his trade with Joseph the carpenter.

The father and mother of this Tarsus boy were Greek-speaking Jews. The father had been admitted also to full Roman citizenship, and so his son Saul was free-born. Strictly religious in the Hebrew faith, his parents circumcised him the eighth day; taught him the law as they taught him to talk; taught him a trade as well. A boy, said they, who is not taught to work is the same as a thief.

His parents visited Jerusalem on some pious errand. The boy, as Jesus had been, was taken along; was permitted to wear the talith and be called a son of the law; to leave his mother and keep company with men, asking and answering questions.

He was left in Jerusalem to be educated. In those days an education meant to know and do the will of God as found in the law of Moses. The boy Saul was not only a brainy student of the law, keen and ingenious, but also a strict doer of the Word. He was prompt to translate thoughts into deeds. His ability and behavior were such that he early came to dignity and office. With him office meant duty. He knew no such word as temporising, or compromise. As a

## NOTABLE SERMONS

favorite student of Gamaliel, he may have been present when Jesus was before the council for condemnation. It would have been like him to be of the party that arrested him and brought him to Annas and Caiaphas. Perhaps he was.

Anyway,—less than five years afterward, he, as a member of the Grand Council, voted and acted for the death of Stephen, the first martyr. He noted his manner, and heard his prayer: “Lay not this sin to their charge! Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

True churchman that he was, energetic to stamp out disorders and heresies, and compel righteous conformity, he journeyed to Damascus on an errand of duty.

He saw a vision, heard a voice, and lost his eyesight. Some wise and honest men say that he had a sun-stroke, followed by acute ophthalmia. In a week or so, this persecutor Saul began to tell in public and private the story of Jesus whose voice he said he had heard, and whose glory had struck him blind. The honest persecutor had become an apostle.

To escape the fury of the zealots among whom he had been leader, he fled from Damascus to the mountains of Arabia, the regions where Moses and Elijah communed with God long ages before;—perfecting there the union between himself and his master, bringing every thought into the obedience of Christ. He emerged from his retirement at the end of two years, and visited Jerusalem to be rejected by the Jews and distrusted by Christians. He retired to Tarsus and

## *JESUS AND PAUL*

lived in repressed but active and costly obscurity for many years, until fatherly Barnabas, who knew of him, his history, his zeal and his power, brought him to Antioch to testify that the Jesus whom many Jews were believing, in a timid way, to be the Messiah for whom Israel was waiting, was indeed more! a prince, a Savior, to be preached to all the world, to the Jews first, but also to the Greeks, and to all men.

“Wake! Break out! The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared!”

Now our apostle vibrates between Antioch and Jerusalem, a beat or two, on errands. Then he pushes off into unknown lands, is gone two years, and comes back with welts and scars, to tell that Gentiles as well as Jews are believing and proving their faith by gifts and costly works, by the witness of signs and wonders wrought by the Holy Ghost.

A year or more he tarries at Antioch, and visits Jerusalem to argue, and to testify: “God is able to make man stand erect in righteousness by faith, without the splints and bandages of law and ceremony.” The timid apostles accepted the cash he brought, believed his stories, and allowed: “Yes, perhaps, in those out-of-the-way regions, among the Gentiles, God may get along without Moses’ help: but,—well, yes, we won’t oppose you. Go! and don’t forget mother church at Jerusalem.”

Off he shot, into regions whose very names were strange to Jerusalem: Lycaonia, Galatia, Phrygia; the

### NOTABLE SERMONS

cities Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens,—and Corinth, the great world-city. He was gone three years.

Back he came, with more welts, scars, and bruises, and more money for the poor saints at Jerusalem.

Off he went again: supporting himself, revisiting all the sites where he had left churches, writing costly letters to churches that he could not visit. At Ephesus, planting himself without help from man, he evangelized all the regions around. He came back at the end of five years to be arrested by a religious mob at Jerusalem, condemned by a council of which he was once a member, rescued by Roman soldiers, and sent a prisoner to Rome! But wherever he was and with whomsoever associated, he was the same enthusiast, scintillating with the testimony of the Gospel, and the grace of God.

At Rome, after several imprisonments, he was put to death.

Here then is a man! Of his experiences in detail, in his career for fifteen years,—and such years!—we have only a hint here and there. What memories arose in his mind, as, sorely against his taste, he recounted them as proofs of his sincerity, strength, and apostleship!

“Are they apostles? I more. Are they servants of Jesus Christ? My service is more costly. Of the Jews five times received I the forty stripes, thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned. Thrice was I shipwrecked [and this was before his wreck recounted by Luke]. A night and a day have I been in the

## *JESUS AND PAUL*

deep. I have had journeyings often, perils of water [freshets in the mountains], perils of robbers, perils of my own countrymen, perils in cities, perils in the wilderness, weariness and painfulness. I have been in watchings often, in hunger and thirst and fastings often, in cold and nakedness; and beside my daily duties, I have had the care of all the churches!"

What shall we say? What shall we think of this man? this man who blushes and apologizes, and calls himself a fool for recounting his costly heroisms; who would rather glory in his infirmities! "By the grace of God I am what I am! Were it possible, I would make up in my own body what is lacking of the suffering of Christ!"

There are soft-handed, big-headed scholars sitting at their desks in matted libraries, who write books called rational criticism. "Yes, Paul was no doubt a very able man, an enthusiast, a fanatic. He never fully recovered from his sun-stroke. Genius to madness is near akin. His career is a notable illustration of the power of hallucinations to support the body."

Nay, good sir, but see that there is method in this madness. This rhapsodizing lunatic has dashed off letters in haste so profound and so broad, that for nineteen hundred years the strongest minds have builded on them the theologies that rule the thinkers of the world. He knew, too, that he was handling sublime and eternal truths that would be acknowledged by the thoughtful.

*NOTABLE SERMONS*

This meteoric mad-man it was who sang this immortal song:

Charity suffereth long and is kind.

Charity envieth not.

Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.

Doth not hehave itself unseemly. Seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked.

Thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.

Beareth all things, believeth all things.

Hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity never faileth!

This hallucinated ranter wrote to the Christians at Corinth who delighted in noisy excitements: "I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might teach others, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." It was this sun-struck fanatic who taught: "Except a man work, neither shall he eat; let him that stole steal no more; be quiet; work with your own hands; provide things honest in the sight of men; speak the truth one to another; be kind one to another; forgiving, even as God in Christ has forgiven you."

Try him, logician. He is a close reasoner.

Prove him, oh moralist! He loves the right and scorns the wrong.

Test him, oh man of heroic mould. His constancy and courage shall shame you into silence.

Listen to him, oh woman! for he bids men to so love their wives as Christ the church.

This man is not mad. He speaks the words of tenderness, truth, and love.

## JESUS AND PAUL

How shall we account for such an exceptional man?

God, by his spirit and providence, keeps guard over the character and reputation of the two who upon earth and among men have witnessed for him as no other two,—Jesus, and Paul.

And have we not in these two precisely what we need to perfect our faith in the otherwise unthinkable union of man to God. The Son of God made man; and the son of man rising to become a son of God. As I said:

Stalactite Jesus;  
Stalagmite Paul.

Amid the darkness of our world-cave, where men grope and die in their ignorance and unbelief, and leave their bones upon the floor, I see the snow-white pillar, and am drawn to it. Where its purity is lost to sight in the upper mystery, I hear the voice, "Come unto me; the pure in heart shall see God."

And as I wonder, "How can this ever be?" I hear at my side, "I also am a man. Follow me even as I follow Christ. I count not myself to have attained. But I follow after. Come on. Follow me."

The vision is from above; the interpretation is at hand, it is near me,—the words of Paul. Blessed be God, neither the vision nor the interpretation shall fail from among men, until the need of them ceases.

Bow, oh heaven; be lifted up, oh earth; for the kingdom of God is at hand.

Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.



# Meditations on Trees

*Preached in*

*The Park Church, Elmira, N. Y., August 24, 1879*



## MEDITATIONS ON TREES

*He shall be like a tree—Ps. 1:3; Jer. 17:7-8.*

Instruction suggested by trees and forests is found in all the Scriptures. Even when the tree is not mentioned, the tree picture comes in,—thus: “Lifting up holy hands to heaven without wrath or doubting:” “Rooted and grounded in love, grow up into him.” But I will not stay to remind you of the Bible trees. They begin in Eden, the trees of Paradise, they appear in the glorious consummation, the trees of life on either bank of the river of life. There are few books of the Bible from which I might not take a text to justify a sermon of trees, and their suggestions to a thoughtful spirit. To such a sermon I invite you now, of the truths that have been whispering or roaring in my ears for six weeks.

I think there is more of the law of the Lord to meditate upon in the woods than in a city, like Elmira. The thoughts that run in the minds of men and women in a city are not usually uplifting, but rather out-reaching. We think too much about each other. So I say I verily think that the good man thriving like a tree planted by rivers of water, will be more accompanied by God in the woods than in the city. Like Adam he will hear the voice of the Lord God walking in the forest garden, and will not hide among the trees, but rather **listen**.

### NOTABLE SERMONS

Here in my camp, a bowl among surrounding tree-clad mountains, with a quiet pond at its lowest parts, there is rarely, if ever, a driving storm. The mountains lie about us and guard us from the winds high up, which drive the clouds. Quite often we can look up and see three levels of clouds, each obeying a different wind, while our little pond is unvexed by any, reflecting all. Thus is it with the meek and poor in spirit, open-faced toward heaven; storms pass over them, but they have great peace in their low estate, reflecting truly the deepest heavens, and noting, themselves unvexed, the storms that drive men above them three ways at once.

1. But the trees, not lakes, preach to us to-day. I note that there is no silence deeper than I have felt under their shadow, and we have no noises here louder than the roaring of the wilderness. On still nights I hear the sound of a coming wind full three miles away. Steadily the volume of tone increases, draws near, passes over our bowl in silence, and takes up the roar as the wind strikes the forest of the opposite mountain.

This roaring of the woods always reminds me of the roaring of the people when a cyclone of passion sweeps along, and men add each his unintelligent voice to the storm, public sentiment. The sound is impressive, awe-inspiring. He is indeed a brave man who can hear the wind in the woods and sleep tranquilly, or, like Lloyd Garrison in Baltimore, St. Paul at Lystra, or Jesus in Jerusalem, stand rooted in the

## MEDITATIONS ON TREES

truth, while the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing.

Poor trees, I say, they think they are saying something. They sway and roar in company. Their voices are terrible. But after all, it is only the wind that sets them a-going. Come whence it may, they cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth. So are the people, obeying inspirations that few stop to examine. The noise of the multitude is equally empty whether it shout "Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" or, "Crucify him, crucify him,"—the very next day.

The prince of the power of the air is the best name for him whose influences sweep over and through the forests of men and set them a-roaring, now for war, now for peace; one day for a king, next day for his head; one day for a great church, next day for the blood of arch-bishops and confessors.

Men, more than they know, are trees, and the noises they make are but winds that come sweeping every whence. Men make a noise, a great noise, crying out for a half hour at a time: "Great, great, great is Diana," or some other vanity. Wait long enough and the wind ceases and men are still, knowing but little one by one, and saying less.

So the winds have preached to me many a night in my tent, and having learned to bear their noisiness, it seems a little easier to listen to the talk of men and to read the papers, without being moved by the noise they make, instead of the amount of truth

### NOTABLE SERMONS

and reason that commends itself to the listening spirit within. Try the spirits (*winds*) whether they be from God. And further, since all men are more played upon than playing, and most men have little thought as to what wind it is that moves them, surely he is wise who prays: "Come, oh breath of God,—come, oh wind from the Lord and breathe upon me, that I may have a little song in the night, and deep thoughts by day." How precious these thoughts!—gentle as the sun-quivering breath of summer among the waiting trees, in the presence of God, the life-giver. Not in the storm, not in the fire, not in the earthquake found the prophet his God, but in the still, small, voice.

The roaring of our helpless trees has made me love the quivering, sunshiny silence of this Sabbath hour, and taught me further to wait, wait, wait, when great popular movements are upon us, until such time as, the blast spent, there shall be revelations and warmings of spirit, and gifts of truth to every prayerful man that stands like a tree in his place, lifting up holy hands to heaven without wrath or doubting.

Let us never fear the storms. They will pass. The silent sunshine alone gives life. Remember this the next time some great excitement comes. Remember this, citizens, when October comes and all hands help on the noise of the storm before election. Do your duty, thoughtfully, not passionately; quietly, not noisily.

2. Our camp is high compared with the Chemung

## MEDITATIONS ON TREES

valley, low compared with the higher lands that en-girdle our pond. We are so high that all our water, whether from lake or spring, is nearly as pure as when it fell from heaven. It will be hard water by the time it reaches the lower Delaware; and the soil is somehow simpler, less unctuous, and less complex in quality than far down the valleys where are gathered the washings of many a square league of all sorts. The trees that grow here are few in kind, not very large, but what there is of life in them seems to be pure, fresh, fragrant, uninfested. We have the beech, birch, hard and soft maple, ash, now and then a wild cherry, and old hemlocks on swamp lands. They make a forest of singular suggestiveness both in sound and seeming.

Seeming, we all see and say. For who has not noted the fresher green of birch compared with beech, of beech compared with maple, of maple compared with oak, of all compared with hemlock?

Herein our tree society sets an example. Each tree dresses and undresses for itself and not for society. I cannot see why men and women should seek to uniform themselves by disguising clothes. Why not wear always revealing garments? I do not mean garments voluptuously revealing, but garments such as will show the taste and honorable industry of the wearer?

Trees have **new clothes**, but they have no disguising best clothes for ceremony; no dress suits and business suits; no work clothes and Sunday clothes.

## NOTABLE SERMONS

It would be indeed difficult to decide just what the uniform of our professional men should be; wherein a lawyer should dress unlike a doctor, and both unlike a preacher, and all of them unlike a teacher. But surely any way of dressing is better than the costly, inconvenient, and meaningless habits to which we submit.

The white, shining, smooth birch grows beside the ridgy, buggy hemlock. The beech is thinner than the birch but smoother than the hemlock. The ash softens the ruggedness of hemlock, yet avoids the spotty sandiness of beech,—and so on.

Why not, oh men and women, why not more and more as we grow old and are rooted in our grooves, should we not dress as we please? And why not, as we age, gracefully allow something of our history to show itself in our dress?

A forest, I said, of singular suggestiveness both in sound and seeming, and the seeming preaches to us of dress.

The sound of the trees when played upon by the wind teaches the same lesson. Do you know how many voices there are in the woods and among the trees? I cease to wonder that in days of old when men were susceptible, these voices made the woods weird and solemn places where unseen divinities dwelt. I wonder not that they talked of dryads,—the nymphs incarnate in the trees. For trees have voices. When one sings solo in the wind, a blind man might know the voice and call the tree by

## MEDITATIONS ON TREES

name. A pine-grove sighs, and so does a hemlock. But the pine is the sigh of a woman, the hemlock the lower, shorter sigh of a man. The winter woods, waiting spring, sigh unanimously. In summer, rejoicing and forgetting the evil days of frost, they roar together like a prosperous people. Still, as I said, no two trees talk alike. They none of them say "the proper thing." They say the **true** thing or nothing. There's no creed or profession of faith for these trees. They grow in the same sunshine; their roots feel round in the dark of the soil. Their trunks are all wooden, and will burn with blazes on the log heap. Still the tree as long as it lives and grows, in seeming and in sound is **itself** and not another. Oh happy day in all our churches, when Christians speak each man for himself the truth that is in him;—swift to hear, slow to speak, and yet when speaking, speaking as an oracle of God!

3. As I write these suggestions of the trees, the question, the doubt, may arise in "practical minds," whether all these and other thoughts are fairly suggested by the trees, and are not rather the mere fancies and notions and hobbies of me, the writer. A bark peeler goes through the woods, lounges into camp and says, "There's full ten cord of bark in that swamp!" He has an eye for bark. He has no other thought. The man prospecting for a farm notes the plateau, counts the maples, and says: "This is good grass land." The lumber man counts up the ash and cherry trees, and the dainty girl gathers mosses and with ferns weaves

## NOTABLE SERMONS

crowns for the little ones, or with brighter wild berries, little vine sprigs, and star-like blossoms, puts together an ornament for herself. So every one gets from the woods according to fancy,—and all this long essay or sermon of trees is only a preacher's fancy,—proves nothing,—mere sentiment.

There's value in the suggestion, my practical friend. Hold on to it. What any man sees and thinks and says anywhere, depends upon (1) what is round him, and (2) what he is. Every witness testifies the impression made upon him, and nothing more. Hence the importance of becoming one's self more and more something, in order to see and hear and think more and more as we pass along the journey of life.

Remember, too, that as it is with these woods, so also is it with the Bible. These woods suggest, according to the character and habits of the one visiting them. And the Bible suggests to the reader, very largely according to what he *is*, rather than according to what the Bible says. And in general:

Every man at all times by his culture or non-culture, by his largeness or littleness, by his hope or his despair, colors and shapes all things that impress him. If he be a true, upright, healthy man, he derives true impressions; if he be a pinched pattern—pinched impressions. Hence again I say—the prime importance of being such a man in consciousness and character that the woods, or the Bible, or the ocean, or the throngs of men, shall make right and true impressions!

## MEDITATIONS ON TREES

4. Now I turn again to my preachers, to tell you what other things they seem to say to me,—the thoughts they suggest or even compel.

Some years ago, I know not how many, a fire swept over these mountains and burned all the light stuff in the woods. The wind drove the flames against the trees, but the heat was not great enough to destroy them. It killed one side of all the beeches—our tree of thinnest bark. The other side remains vigorous. Most of the trees show no sign of damage, and we have to trust the testimony of settlers that there has been a fire. Still on one side they are almost all dead or decaying. The ax goes into the eye at the first blow. So I have learned to look upon every beech tree with compassion,—in just the same way that with years I have learned to have compassion upon all men and all women who have passed the age of thirty. I know that they have been scorched. However cheerful and thrifty they may seem, I know that they have secret death in consciousness. However enviable they may be reckoned, I know that, if the whole story were told, no man would be willing to take the evil with the good. Have compassion for all men, for there's been a fire among us and all have suffered. All of us are numb—dead—here or there.

There was a fire,—a great war,—and today are among us silent, deep-hearted fathers and mothers who can only remember—the war took my boy. There was a fire, a great fire of drunkenness, and there be wives and parents not a few who have been burned on

### NOTABLE SERMONS

that side, never to be whole again. There was a pestilence, and graves were made, and they who dug and filled them can never be again the same thrifty trees of hope they once were. They are burned on one side.

Lay open for me at one ax-blow the secret texture of my fellow men, and they all show like these fair-skinned beeches. Let no man try to tell what a proud man suffers when he fails, and tumbles from credit to bankruptcy; what another suffers who has been grossly deceived by one whom he trusted. He's dead on that side. He trusts no one ever again.

So the fire of experience sweeping among the groves of men incessantly bring to pass great sorrows and secret dyings from which none are exempt. The hard stateliness of towering men no longer impresses or deceives me. I remember my beech trees, burnt on one side, and I know that, if let into the secret places, I shall find much to love and much to pity, much hidden strength and heroism. Have compassion upon them in bonds as bound with them, and them that suffer affliction as yourself also in the flesh. For all are partakers, sooner or later.

5. A short half mile from camp, just at the up-spring of a hill, stood until this year a large, crooked, warty, mossy birch. 'Twas not tall. 'Twas not in all directions broad. It conformed to no rules of tree symmetry. It was hollow, far, far up. One monstrous limb had been wrenched off, and the raw spot had rotted down through, till the tree was hollow as a

## MEDITATIONS ON TREES

chimney. Describe to me the perfect tree, and then reverse each item for its opposite, and you have my tree. Tall?—no, short. Graceful?—no, fat and awkwardly scraggy. Fair? Smooth? No, rugged and warty—monstrous seed warts big as hay-cocks. Healthy? Thrifty? No, dying, rotting.

All this! And yet I tell you that in all the woods I have found no one object which so arrested and charmed the eye as this gnarly old birch tree,—that fell, alas, since last year. Everyone remembered it. And it was eye-satisfying. It leaned, and its roots were half out of ground on one side; but mosses covered the exposure as with a garment. It was warty, but through the splits came up green, oh such an exquisite green, of birch twigs. Little birds dropped seeds there, and grasses and flowers grew on these huge excrescences. It was life victorious over death; beauty surviving strength; songs after crashes of the storm; and to it turned the eyes of even the dullest. It was a way-mark when the road was but a pathway. Now that it has fallen, in memory it is by far the most impressive object these woods have given me.

And I say to myself: Is death, death? Is evil, evil wholly? We wonder, and theologians spin theories as to the origin of evil—the use of the Devil. Left to ourselves we should prattle together of straight and perfect men stuck in rows of good order like pins on a paper. But somehow there is a sublime beauty in the grand, defiant, yet decorated ugliness. That fallen birch tree makes me think of Milton's archangels fal-

### NOTABLE SERMONS

leii. Or better still, the tree reminds me of the gospel word spoken by Paul: Where sin abounded, grace doth **more** abound. Or that sublimest word of prophetic thought in all Scripture—Have I created good and not evil also, said the Lord. Or as Job spake: Shall we receive good at the hands of the Lord, and not evil also?

This question, the nature and origin of evil, is one of the deepest, if not the deepest question, with which a man ever grapples. All thinkers worthy the name have brooded it, and all saints shadowed by sorrows have waited for God to throw light upon it in his own good time. But somehow that old birch tree standing up so superbly beautiful, its age, decay, rifts, warts, crooks, to the contrary notwithstanding, comforts me. It seems to tell me of grand men ruined by vices, yet beautified as they die out of their rooting. Or more it seems to prefigure and prophesy a vision of Elmira, city of my home and love—vision which shall one day come to me at the spring of the hill that leads to my heavenly home. I shall see the vices, the rugged men, the missing enterprises, the seams and scars; but I shall see the churches, the schools, the loving and laborious women, and the spring of life and frolic! I shall yet see Elmira from afar and say, "How beautiful!"

[Evidently a week intervenes here before Mr. Beecher takes up the subject again.]

Brethren, I have been living for a summer among the trees—and that too without one instant of thought-

## MEDITATIONS ON TREES

lessness. Can I put these thoughts all on paper, sitting on this damp day, my last Sunday here, in my damp tent, writing with unwonted pen on damp paper?

I think there's not a tree in sight but has some curious crook, and that crook has a history. It's an old, old crook. Its cause lies far back in sapling days. Is there a straight man listening to me? And is there a crooked man who does not see back to the cause, the time and place? Deliver me also, O Lord, from the sins of my youth.

There be leanings and stretchings of the trees that are superlative in their beauty. On the rocky runway down which the overflow of our ice-cold spring goes prattling night and day to the little lake—between these stones no tree can grow. There's a great space, or *was*, of clear sunshine. And all the trees around have leaned over into the light, and filled in the space, until there they are, huge birches twining their tops together in a cathedral arch, so graceful that in all days our highest praise of Gothic architecture is to say: "Its arches and tracery and long aisles remind one of groves." And these over-growing trees are all in search of sunlight. So men, great men who love the truth, lean away from their fellows and overhang spots by themselves sterile and ugly. All our lake, too, is overhung by these sun-loving trees. They are bowed like mourners over a grave, and at every puff of wind drop tears down. The eye does not soon weary of their bowing graces. And there be bowed

## NOTABLE SERMONS

men and women not a few whose curved backs and stiffened joints tell of searches and services. One old man comes to mind whom I never saw until he was far on in his sixties; but his back told of labors, home-making, in lands like this, rocky, high, pure-watered. He saw days of greater ease and affluence, but his posterity will hardly take shape that will remind us of labor so admirable and manly.

The great trees are not all of the woods. The low-growing ferns, nettles, shin-hopples, mosses, and under-growth generally;—but for them and their clinging shade the moisture and fertility of soil were soon gone, and the great trees would suffer, and the springs go dry, and rivers fail. Oh, the carpet of these woods, the lower classes! Only about forty trees to the acre that reach up like pillars, but sixty million little live things growing and dying, modest and serviceable. I can't think of great trees and great men without thinking of the little spears and sprigs of life, and the little, obscure common people, servants and slaves, without whom the greatness of the greatest were impossible. A general without an army is no general, a king without subjects no king, a conspicuous priest or preacher nothing, without the wide-lying contentment of a pious people.

The trees keep preaching to me. See! Only because of the mould slowly accumulating for thousands of years is to-day's forest possible. Vegetation never began big trees first. Soil-making goes before crops. And soil is dead, earthy matter enriched by de-

## MEDITATIONS ON TREES

posits from the dead that have died. Leave the forests to themselves and nothing dies in vain. Nay, our gardeners go to the woods to gather leaf mold! And men to-day are rooted and growing up out of the mould of a long ancestry. Experience accumulated is but a pile of warnings from the past. The biggest trees grow on deepest soils. The greatest men grow on the mounds heaped up by deathful blunders by-gone. Nothing suffers or dies in vain. The God of life gives life. Squander it and die; someone after you shall gather up the fragments and be the greater man because of your fool's end.

And then those patient, persisting roots, that I never see with the eye, also speak to me. The trees defy the storm, thanks to the roots. How they grow in the dark, obeying the call of spring long before the snow-shroud has been dissolved, sending up sugar-sap, thawing its own way through frost-crusts, and praying, "How long, how long ere we shall receive as well as give?" And these roots are of kin to the trees they serve. As we grade our little roads, we know the beech, the birch, the hemlock roots by the odor of their bruises as surely as we know the trees by their flaunting leaf. Moreover, for culture and propagation we can spare the showy tops, but we have care of the roots; and in the great transplantings of men to the groves of God, the obscurest among men may have a vital value surpassing that of the most famous. There are last that shall be first.

Thus my life, exempt from public haunts, finds tongues in trees, and good in everything.



# Prohibition

*Preached in*

*The Park Church, Elmira, N. Y., October 17, 1886*

*Hornell, N. Y.*

*Waverly, N. Y.*



## PROHIBITION

On Sunday Oct. 17, 1886, hundreds, if not thousands, of pastors and preachers, spoke in favor of "prohibition," and of a third party to push this question to the front.

Not thinking for a moment that any appeal of a preacher can perceptibly affect an election—except it be by the rule of contraries—I joined myself to the goodly fellowship of the prophets, and on that day made my argument and appeal.

This same argument, I shall lay before you at this time.

**Politics**—as we use the word— is the art of carrying the next election. The game of politics, we say. All is fair in love, in war, and in politics. With politics in this sense, preachers ought not to meddle.

I have noticed that the players of this game of politics do not much respect or trust each other; nor are they as a general thing highly esteemed or trusted by their fellow-citizens.

It is this aspect of politics that compels a faithful pastor and teacher to consider the subject,—quite as much to save young men from the degradations of politics, as to save the land by prohibition.

On the one hand I long to see young men wide-awake, intelligent, well-informed, active and pushing, in public affairs. On the other hand it grieves me beyond expression when I see them swept into dis-

## NOTABLE SERMONS

honorable, secret, unlawful and corrupting associations by the party with which they decide to act. I observe:

When there is a live question of great importance submitted to the people for their consideration, political controversies promote intelligence and patriotism; but when there is no question of importance before the people, straightway politics becomes a game, played in the interest of the leaders only. The voting citizens in large masses are bought and sold and traded off between party-leaders, as if they were so many sheep or cattle. It grieves me to meet with a young man enthusiastic as a Democrat, or enthusiastic as a Republican, when I know beyond peradventure that the leaders of the two parties are ready for all sorts of trades and dickers by which to further their own personal ambition. It grieves me to see young men, and ignorant men, misguided and treated as so many chips to gamble with, or checkers for a game. It grieves me to find the laws of the State defied, and the conscience of all right-thinking men insulted, when our election days degenerate into mere auctions, and almost without disguise men come to the election precincts in Elmira, asking "How much is there in it today?" "What is a vote worth today?"

This state of things proves that there is no vital question or issue in controversy between the two old parties. There is no question of policy as to the city, county, state, or nation, upon which the Democratic

## PROHIBITION

party differs from the Republican, or the Republican from the Democratic.

I invite you to prove the truth or error of this statement, by laying side by side the platforms of the two parties. I know of no other way in which to learn what they propose—or to what high controversy they invite us.

Now the remedy for this state of things is to find some new issue, some important question, some general evil to be removed, or some public good to be attained; some danger to ward off, or some prosperity to win by high deserving. Therefore I remark:

1. For the clearing and purifying of our political atmosphere, we need a live issue of some kind.

2. Issues cannot be invented or fixed up by ingenious men, however well-meaning. Burning questions come to a head of themselves.

As long ago as 1866 when the whole land was throbbing with prosperity by reason of an inflated currency, and cautious, conservative statesmen began contraction, with the necessary accompaniment of distress, an issue offered itself between green-backs or treasury notes on the one side, and gold and silver on the other, as a proper basis for the currency of a civilized people. That was a good issue. I had hope that it would be thoroughly discussed and settled, but this was not to be. The green-back party, with its live question, could not so popularize its demands as to command the intelligent consent of the Nation. Its absurdities and extravagances repelled

## NOTABLE SERMONS

the judicious, and the country will probably go on for some generations yet suffering from evils which this well-meaning party sought to remedy.

The so-called "green-back caze" is gone by. The two old parties are left like two old hulks, with Quaker guns, loaded with mud to squirt and spatter at each other. But this cannot go on for ever. And you witness today the growth of the so-called "labor movement,"—which is in fact organized discontent of the poor, those called, by only the test of money, the lower classes; against the compact organization of the rich, held together by the subtle ties of self-interest and finance. The labor movement is coming to a head!

The "labor movement" has many subordinate counts. I do not yet see what particular count will first come to the front for trial and demand settlement; but I frankly acknowledge that as a Christian and patriot, I dread this class of issues. I would rather have some other questions for political controversy than those that appeal to the envy and hatred of the rich by the poor, and the timid caution of the rich seeking to protect their power and property by strong government. If this issue shall come, I shall do what one man can to temper the infernal heats and hatreds that it will engender.

Happily, however, another issue is coming to a head, namely the demand that the manufacture and traffic in alcoholic drinks shall be, by vote of the people, brought to an end.

## PROHIBITION

For various reasons I would gladly see this prohibition issue thoroughly discussed and settled, by an enthusiastic vote one way or the other.

I ask you then, in passing, to notice that the **labor reform** issue most damages the Democratic party. The **prohibition question** most damages the Republican party. Both of them are alike in this, that the discussion of them grieves the long-time lovers of either party, and the trimming politicians of both. But I repeat, if the two old parties are too timid or too time-serving to risk something by inscribing on their banners a demand worth making or worth resisting, they must not be surprised if watchful, intelligent, courageous, thinking men insist upon rescuing politics from corruption, and upon making our controversies as they once were, an education for the whole people.

Now the way is clear, I trust, for a temperate presentation of the considerations which in my judgment justify an earnest advocacy of **constitutional prohibition**.

The exact question, viewed politically, is not, (a) is it wrong *per se* to drink intoxicants? or, (b) is total abstinence for any reason a duty? or, (c) can men be made morally good by legislation? or, (d) have we the right to abridge personal liberty and enact sumptuary laws? But it is, (e) has the manufacture and sale of intoxicants as a **beverage** become so injurious to the country, economically, industrially,

## NOTABLE SERMONS

socially, politically, morally, that it ought to be suppressed? That is the sole question to be asked.

Putting this question in my own language, would we be better off with or without whiskey, yes or no? With or without distilleries, saloons, beer gardens, etc? Those of you who say, "Yes, we would be better off," come vote with us. Those of you who sincerely think that we are better off with these things than without them, vote no. I will answer not only for myself, but for nearly all the prohibitionists with whom I am acquainted, that as soon as we have got a square answer from the people for or against wine, beer, and whiskey, and the traffic in them, we will submit without a murmur; but as things now are, we insist that this plain, simple question, "Do you favor, or do you oppose, the manufacture of, and traffic in, alcoholic drinks," is a proper one to ask. The people should have a chance to answer it.

I can make a very strong argument myself on either side of this question. I can easily see that a man may be intelligent, as well as conscientious, and vote either way. For this very reason, it is a good question with which to go to the people. For, next:—

I pray you observe, we are not proposing to organize a crusade against bad men, but we are organizing a crusade against what we think is a dangerous and damaging commodity—alcohol.

I deeply regret all denunciations of distillers, wine-manufacturers, brewers, and liquor-sellers generally, as if they were sinners above their fellow-men. Not

## PROHIBITION

for the first time by any means, I desire to put it on record, that in my judgment, my fellow-citizens engaged in liquor-manufacture and traffic, if they knew of any other way in which they could make as much money, would gladly give up the business. They, better than we, know the drawbacks which cause them at times a profound disgust.

But in this commercial age, the received maxim of political economy is that "demand regulates the supply," and that it is right from a business point of view to sell any commodity that another man wishes to buy; and I am not willing to demand that distillers, wine-merchants, and saloon-keepers, be judged by a higher standard of righteousness than any of my fellow-men accept in their callings.

In a dispassionate way we may all see that, while we find no fault with the men, leaving them to give an account each to his God, we have great fault to find with the stuff they manufacture and sell.

Twenty-five years ago we became familiar with the phrase, "contraband of war." Civilized nations have a list of things which a neutral must not sell to either party. They are contra-banda,—against the proclamation. If he attempt to sell and is caught at it, his contraband goods are forfeited, and no one murmurs. May not an intelligent and patriotic people make up their minds and declare that liquor is contraband of peace, and thus put it beyond the pale of law, liable to be seized wherever found, and no longer

## NOTABLE SERMONS

to be manufactured openly, or dealt in as are other commodities?

Right here I ask you; if, taught by experience of dishonesty, disorder, and free-fights, liquor is contraband on election day, why is it not just, lawful, and reasonable to make it, if we can, contraband also for the other three hundred and sixty-four days in the year?

Again. This issue is a good one because it is so simple. Destruction is always more simple and practicable than restraint or regulation. As a thinker and moralist, I confess that I ever incline to fine and delicate distinctions; but as an observer of my fellow-men and a regarnder of history, I am compelled to admit that nicely-shaded opinions and cautious discriminations can never be wrought into the heads and hearts of the whole people. I for myself frankly admit that which few prohibitionists would admit, that I see so many uses for alcoholic beverages and have myself derived from them so great a benefit, and find them as a matter of history to have been used by so many people whom we all consent to reverence, that I shrink from a sweeping condemnation of their use. I think that temperance is a higher virtue than total abstinence. I think that a regulation of the liquor traffic would be better than a prohibition of it. And if I were permitted to shape an issue for the people, I should try to teach them to use this and all other agents and not abuse them.

But I perceive as a matter of history that no such

## PROHIBITION

adjusted and discriminating policies can ever commend themselves to the total mass of American voters. What we need is something flat-footed, right out, black and white. Whiskey or no whiskey. The simplicity then of this prohibition-issue marks it as an available one. Take sides, gentlemen. Whiskey or no whiskey.

Again:—It is sometimes pleaded that if we cannot regulate the manufacture and traffic, how can we ever hope to prohibit it and eradicate it? If we cannot close the saloons and drink shops on Sunday, how can we hope to close them all days?

This plea is sound in words, but unsound experimentally. If an elephant break loose from a menagerie and run amuck down Broadway, the keepers follow, laying nooses, throwing lassoes, trying to regulate and restrain the beast; until by and by, he having slain a dozen men, they find it more easy to put a musket ball in his eye,—although he is worth ten thousand dollars,—than it is to restrain or regulate him.

If there be leprosy and contagion in the walls and joinings of a house and we have scraped and white-washed, and used disinfectants, but found that whoever lives in that house takes the disease,—fire will cure it, and our word purify really means make pure by fire.

If through centuries, at least three, the history of legislation in England and in this country has been one ever-increasing, conspicuous, disastrous failure in

## NOTABLE SERMONS

the task of regulation, the proper experiment to try next is prohibition. For if a majority of the people are once aroused, and have declared in an orderly, political way, and have bedded their verdict in the constitution itself, that alcoholic drinks are henceforth contraband in time of peace and, being no longer protected by law, are liable to destruction wherever found, you see at once how simple the process of law-execution becomes.

**Constitutional prohibition** is our watch-word and war cry! We are tired of legislative tinkering, and legal pettifogging.

Here I remark again, it never enters the mind of a well-informed prohibitionist that he can change human nature and bring wines and beers and whiskeys to an end. I daily wonder at seeing men pay from two to six dollars a gallon for whiskey, when, at an expense of twenty dollars, any man could make it in his own house as easily as he makes bread, and at a cost of not more than twenty-five cents a gallon.

While the world stands, and the sun ripens fruit, there will be wines, and ciders, and fermenting juices.

No law can restrain men from manufacturing what they please for their own use in their own houses; but when for commercial purposes the manufacture of the same thing has been stimulated by the enormous gains of the traffic, so that in addition to its own fierce temptation addressed to the appetite, is brought the solicitation of active business men, making a market and alluring customers;

## PROHIBITION

then it is right for the people to step in if they please and forbid the manufacture and sale, just as they may forbid the importation of foreign rags, or dynamite, or any other traffic that you choose to name. What a man may do in his own house is one question, with which law will not meddle. What a man may do under the protection of law in the distillery or brewery,—in the market and for the market,—is a very different question.

Other considerations suggest themselves, all of them cumulating to the one result,—that the people not only have a right to, but ought to, take this step forward in behalf of prohibition of the manufacture and traffic in intoxicants.

I forget how many years ago it was that gunpowder was found under the House of Commons, but I know that the tradition of that scare continues to this day, and the secret places and cellars of that vast palace at Westminster are searched with lighted candles every year to see that neither powder nor dynamite has been lodged there. All this to save the Lords and Commons.

Now it is a matter of shameful, sorrowful experience that at least three of our Presidents, I dare not say how many Senators, a greater number still of Congressmen, a brood of lobby men in our capitol at Washington, and an answering company in our capitol at Albany, have been notoriously and disgracefully unfit for their high duties because of strong drink. And this strong drink under various names has

### NOTABLE SERMONS

entrenched itself in committee-room and at lunch-counters. It pervades the public buildings at Washington and Albany and the city of New York, and no resolution of the Senate or of the House is able to drive it out.

Now suppose that the article itself had been contraband of peace so that any courageous citizen, wherever he was, was at liberty to smash every bottle wherever he found it, smash it as he would kill a rat. Do you not see that the problem has become wonderfully simplified?

Again. There are at least three, and I suspect more, of the larger rail-roads of the United States that have taken a long step in advance. They have caused it to be distinctly understood that any employee taking so much as a glass of beer, is liable to immediate dismissal. Does anyone complain of this prohibition in a little world?

Again:—Our ships of war when taking in stores have a guard at the gang-way inspecting every package. Except the surgeon, there is not a man on the ship, from commodore to messenger-boy, who is allowed to take a pint of intoxicating drink on board. To the surgeon, the dangerous agent is sent in sealed packages from the surgeon-in-chief. Here we have prohibition again, very nearly absolute, yet nobody complains. And all over our land I can find you men who are moving heaven and earth to get their beloved sons into the navy, so that they may have their feet on

## PROHIBITION

an American deck, and their heads under an American flag where blessed prohibition is enforced.

Now a policy which is good for a rail-road, good for a ship of war which has in it a thousand men, is certainly good for Elmira. Whatever arguments justify the salvation of the navy by prohibition, would equally justify the salvation of Elmira by prohibition.

Fellow-citizens, you perceive that I am not discussing the temperance question. I am discussing a political question. Is the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drinks a benefit in your judgment to the city of Elmira, the county of Chemung, the state of New York and the United States? Yes or no? If you say, "Yes, it is a benefit," join the Democratic party, honest man that you are, and with them declare your steadfast opposition to any reform of this kind. If you say "No," then stand out, honest man that you are, join this now rising party, and by your voice and vote do what you can, by peaceable and constitutional methods, to banish from our borders this or any other agent whose banishment will in your judgment be for the public welfare.

This is the issue pure and simple. Is the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drinks a benefit or a damage to our city, state, and nation? For myself I answer, it is a damage, and I shall act accordingly. Strangely enough, I think that ninety-nine men in every hundred agree with me perfectly, and yet will not act accordingly. Let me show you what I mean.

## NOTABLE SERMONS

There is not a business man here, not one, who would not feel a little repelled from employing a clerk if he were told that the young man drinks quite regularly, and is a capital judge of liquor. There is not a house-keeper here who would employ a cook if that cook were to stipulate, "I find it necessary to have a gill of whiskey every day." I challenge you to find a single father, whatever his own habits may be, who will not admit that he would rather his son would not drink. You cannot find a single school-committee but would feel shy of appointing a teacher who was an habitual drinker. And there is not a man or woman who uses intoxicating drinks, but does it apologetically. The fact of using them puts him or her on the defensive.

Now while I am very far from saying that all who drink beer or wine or even whiskey are thereby proved to be bad and dangerous men, yet the verdict of the Christian world is against the use of this agent. Therefore any man who uses it must be prepared not merely to say before his God, "I see no harm in it," but, "I see a good so great that it were a sin for me not to use it."

I say that ninety-nine in every hundred of my fellow men agree with me that it would be a great benefit to this entire land if intoxicating drinks were altogether exterminated. But they will not agree with me in my action, and cheerfully, good naturedly, stand up on election day and be counted a prohibitionist. They say:

## PROHIBITION

“But you can’t do it! Prohibition won’t prohibit! And in this state the majority are not in favor of it.”

Again:—It is urged by some that it is not wise to drag down a great reform like this of temperance, and make it a political issue. I reply that the manufacture and traffic in intoxicating drinks has grown to such proportions that it has intruded itself into the political arena already, and stands defiantly asking, “What are you going to do about it?”

I remind you that this traffic pays into our treasury at least 150 million dollars every year, and urges because of this its right to continue. I remind you that the Democratic party does not wish, and the Republican does not dare, to insult or deny this enormous power in politics. I remind you that nine in ten of all the caucuses where the political game is made up and candidates are settled upon for both parties, are held in liquor-saloons. I remind you that the bribery that is now unblushing at our elections in the state of New York began with drinks and cigars.

I remind you of what I suppose to be a fact, that in every city in the United States as large as Elmira, except the cities protected by prohibition, the liquor interest is the controlling power in the common council. **Intentionally so.**

I remind you that distillers have their organization for political purposes; that brewers have their organization; that saloon-keepers have their organization. If, then, this enormous interest has organized to control the legislation of this country, what re-

## NOTABLE SERMONS

mains but for sober men to organize, and, if we can, take this control out of their hands?

It is too late in the day to reproach us prohibitionists with dragging temperance into politics. The question is already in politics in a most inexorable, determined, and abominable form, all the more defiling because not openly avowed, spending its energy in corrupting both parties.

I thank you for listening to me so long. My remarks, if they have not satisfied you, I assure you have satisfied me still less. They have not been well arranged. Let me then in conclusion sketch in outline that which I wish I had been able to set up as an argument, and illuminate with eloquent illustration.

(1) Every citizen entitled to vote should aim to be intelligent, active and conscientious in politics  
(2) Parties must necessarily come to pass. Agreeing citizens must act together. (3) The two existing parties offer us no policy, formulate no demands by which one is distinguished from the other. Hence  
(4) political activity has degenerated. Party leaders are no longer teachers of the people, but have become secret managers, venal conspirators, bribers, and corrupters of the people. (5) For any young man to become an enthusiastic Democrat or enthusiastic Republican is a disgrace to his intelligence, and a damage to the cleanness of his hands. (6) The crying need of the hour is a live issue, an evil to be abated, or a good to be accomplished. (7) We cannot manufacture issues. They come to pass. (8)

## PROHIBITION

Envy and discontent of the laboring and poorer classes have come to a head threatfully. Men by thousands are gathering around the labor party, much to the damage of the Democratic party. The prohibition-issue also is coming to a head and thousands are running to its standard, much to the damage of the voting power of the Republican party. (9) Between these two issues forced upon our attention, the prohibition-issue is far the simpler, safer, and more promising question to discuss at present. (10) A man can be an honest man, earnest and enthusiastic, and take either side of this question. (11) It is in every way a good question for political organization, for (a) the issue is extremely simple. The stupidest thinker can declare an opinion, whiskey or no whiskey. (b) The interest is wide as the nation. It is therefore a good foundation for a national party. (c) The end aimed at not only, but the method of it, is grandly simple. We demand constitutional amendments in every state and in the United States Constitution. (d) The evils to be remedied are within the observation and easy knowledge of every voter. (e) The enemy of our public welfare is not a man or men, or a class. It is a commodity. Wine, beer, whiskey, brandy, gin, rum, we wish to get rid of them. (f) Three-hundred years' experience shows that we cannot regulate this matter, but to prohibit and destroy is simpler and easier always than to regulate. (g) The agent that we would exterminate is already defiantly in the field

## NOTABLE SERMONS

of politics, demanding protection and offering bribes on every hand.

The issue then, my fellow citizens, is not of our making. I do not pretend to foretell what the outcome of our controversy is to be. I neither know nor care to. I am, however, certain that no young Christian citizen will be the worse in his mind or heart or conscience for doing what he can to exterminate intoxicating drinks. I am sure that with this issue he can go into politics, and do his level best; and come out, whether defeated or victorious, without a smirch upon his reputation, with the glow of self-respect and the approval of God.

This is more than I can promise to any of you if you go into the game of politics as it is played today in the city Elmira.

For the purifying of our political methods, for the education of our young men, for the betterment of our legislation, for the diminution of crime, for the protection of families, all of them threatened by this subtle, fascinating agent which but few men are able to use with benefit, and most men find a curse and a destroyer—I am ready to stand forward with my fellow-citizens of agreeing mind and temper, and demand that this public enemy shall be declared contraband in time of peace, and beyond the pale of legal protection.

This conclusion, not hastily matured, I submit to your consideration, my fellow-citizens, entreating you

### *PROHIBITION*

not to toss if from you as fanatical, hare-brained, impracticable.

It were better to die in defeat, endeavoring a great betterment, than to live playing the game of politics, —hurrahing for victories that bring no benefit.



# The Shiptwreck of Paul

*Preached in*

*The Park Church, Elmira, N. Y., April 20, 1884*

*Reformatory, Elmira, May 10, 1885*

*Stamford, Conn., May 17, 1885*

*Hancock, N. Y., March 28, 1886*

*Gleason Health Resort, Elmira, September 18, 1887*

*Richford, N. Y., September 28, 1887*

*Cincinnati, N. Y., August 5, 1888*

*Repeated in The Park Church, Elmira, Jan. 20, 1889*

*Brookton, N. Y., February 23, 1890*

*Buffalo, N. Y., First Presbyterian Church, February  
11, 1892*



## THE SHIPWRECK OF PAUL

*About midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country.—Acts 27:27.*

The story of Paul's shipwreck as told by Doctor Luke who was with him, is a masterpiece of narrative. It merits the attention that has been lavished upon it by critics, navigators, geographers, and even governments. Stories like this have their place in our Bible not by accident, nor by whim of the writers or compilers. Our Bible is of God. See:—

Any sagacious man can frame a prophecy. Any romancer can draw on his imagination for a novel or a parable. But God only can so control the forces of nature and the acts of men that the resulting story or history shall teach like a parable and shine like a prophecy. The story of Abraham down to Joseph the Viceroy, his great grandson, is history and prophecy. The story of Moses and Joshua,—the exodus, wilderness, and holy land,—is both history and prophecy. The story of David, from Goliath to his throne of glory in Jerusalem; the story of Ruth the constant; of Daniel the wise; of Elijah the mysterious and sublime; and finally this elaborate story of Paul's shipwreck: all these gems of narrative, cut to many faces that shine, are (1) true stories, and (2) they teach like so many parables or prophecies. God only, I repeat, can so control the forces of nature and the

## NOTABLE SERMONS

acts of men that the true story of them shall teach. As it is written:—Now these things happened to them by way of a figure; and they were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come.

To return to our shipwreck story, and its lessons.

1. We speak of the “voyage of life.” The phrase is old, trite, and prosy. We embark at birth. We debark at death. We are bound somewhither, as Paul to Rome, the imperial city. That which lies between birth and death is indeed a voyage in a very little boat, a mere canoe easily upset,—a body all too frail. Considering this voyage of life as a strictly personal matter, I note that it ends in a break up; a little shipwreck, as it were. We go to pieces one by one. Our little canoe after many a hard knock and narrow escape, gets a harder one still,—more than it can stand,—and we go ashore upon some unknown country.

Most men are a little timid about dying. They “hedge.” They counsel with the doctors to cure them and keep them alive; and with the priests to make it all right if the doctors fail.

Brethren! it may be that death balances all accounts. It may be that “the debt of nature” once paid, or the bankrupt having surrendered, all is discharged, that he may begin again a new life. It may be so, but I dare not teach that it will be so. Even Shakespeare meditates:—“In that sleep of death, what dreams may come?” And a greater than Shakespeare has said,

## THE SHIPWRECK OF PAUL

“Fear him that hath power to cast both soul and body into hell.”

Sooner or later comes the evening; the shadows deepen unto midnight. Heart and flesh fail. Happy he, who, nearing that undiscovered country, hears within a cheery voice, “There shall be no loss of life, but of the ship only. The body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness.” This voice of hope shall surely sound for him who has feared God and wrought righteousness all along the years of his voyaging. For who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

2. But there be ships bigger than canoes, and wrecks more disastrous than the dying of one man. Many of you by this time should have risen to higher ranges of thought, and be exercised by profounder longings, hopes, and fears, than the loss of one soul or one body. More and more you should be realizing the higher vision of a church, a society, a commonwealth, throbbing with life whereto the individual is contributant, and of it a constituent part. Society is so grand in its possibilities that in all ages the noblest men have agreed that to live, labor, and if occasion demand, die, for one’s country and one’s kind, is an aim so lofty that failure is a success more dazzling than success with other and lower aims. That is to say that the individual will, if truly wise, ever hold himself subordinate to the commonwealth. In other words still: we make our voyage of life, not in birch-bark or skin canoes, able to float one man and only

## NOTABLE SERMONS

one,—each man owning and sailing his own little canoe-body whither he pleases: but rather, as we rise above savagery, we make our voyage of life in ships of larger and larger tonnage. In these great three-decker ships larger and larger numbers sail, for a season harmonized and unified in their interests. By and by it seems as if these united men had solved the problem of association and cooperation, and are able to float themselves in safety above the solemn silences and dark mysteries of death. In which, notwithstanding, the strongest ship, as well as the frailest canoe is seen to founder with all on board.

Consider then this voyage of life from mainland to mainland of two eternities, which men rarely, if ever, make alone; and we may note:

The society or ship, in which we voyage, if it make account of our whence and our whither, is now-a-days called a Church. Another society is called a State, whose citizens busy themselves with the prosperities of today, the production and distribution of wealth so as to attain happiness.

Church and State used to be one ship, but now they are two. Of the State I have nothing to say today. Of the ship or society called Church, I remind you: churches multiply their ceremonies, their threats, and their promises, at and about the two mysteries of birth and death. Churches, all churches, keep order among the crew and passengers by their real or supposed power to land all hands upon the shores of life and safety when the voyage is over. From time to

## *THE SHIPWRECK OF PAUL*

time, however, there have been mutinies in these ships of salvation. The crew not infrequently has risen and murdered the officers. The passengers almost uniformly complain that the rates for passage are too high: "The church is getting too much power, making too much money. Moreover it is doubtful that the officers know any more about the unseen world than other men do. They do not earn their salaries. And their ships of salvation are far from justifying their cost."

So for one reason or another these famous great churches that come booming down the ages, are often wrecked, leaving the passengers to get ashore as best they can; the swimmers swimming, and the rest, some on planks, some on pieces of the ship.

In some notable particulars all these churches, adrift in the dark, have been much alike, and all of them very like Paul's ship. See! there's the captain and his sailors,—the civil authorities; there's the ship's cargo,—golden grain for the market; there are also criminals in chains, and Paul on parole, in charge of military authorities; all bound to imperial headquarters, Rome, and caught in a storm. I can tell in strong outline the story of State and Church in the very words of our true story.

About midnight the sailors deemed that they drew near to some country; and when it was broad daylight, they did not know the land; but the Church fell into a tight place where two seas met. They that could swim cast themselves first into the sea and got

## NOTABLE SERMONS

to land; the rest on boards and broken pieces of the ship, and so they escaped all safe to land.

3. For our instruction and profit, let me note in a more orderly way of detail the third division of my discourse. Strictly and severely speaking, we make the voyage of life from the unknown to the unknown. Our lives are meteoric. As when from the depths of space a little mass of blackness fleetier than a cannon-ball, whence originating or whither bound none can tell, cuts through the upper regions of our atmosphere; reddens, ignites, blazes, emerges, cools, darkens and disappears on its mysterious journey, —leaving men gazing upward and wondering: so come into life and depart out of life the souls of men which, while they live, have all the warmth, rush, and glow of intelligence; for a season while it is called today they are much; departing they leave us awe-stricken and questioning whence and whither. Of knowledge we have nothing whatever in the premises. Science is the child of experience, and we have no voice of experience save One that professes to tell whence I come, whither I go, and why I live.

Yet as men flame out from the mystery of an unknown origin through the business of today, unto and into the mystery of an unknown destiny, it is altogether seemly that they run together in churches. Awed by the unknowable, they join hands and call upon God. As they watch and wait, unequal gifts will appear among them. Some will see further toward the unknown land than others. The hearts that are full

## THE SHIPWRECK OF PAUL

will overflow to the refreshment of hearts that have no wells of water springing up. In that ship of salvation called the Church, shall come to pass officers, crew, and passengers. For some generations the voyage goes on prosperously,—so prosperously that all forget the solemn awe that first brought them together. By and by, officers, crew, and all hands, having lost their reckoning in some storm; or being tossed on strange seas of new experiences—find themselves wrenched and strained. They hear strange noises of distress pervading the ship. Even the shipmen themselves begin to have fears. Passengers are ordered off deck and down below: “Leave church matters to churchmen. Shut your eyes, stop your ears. We are the one true ship, bound to the city of the great king.” About midnight even the shipmen deem that they are drawing near to some country, they know not what. And when it is day, they know not the land.

When great churches are in danger of going to pieces, it is a time of peculiar sinking of heart and distress of mind. To take an example from present-day travel, many go to sea in a well-found ship, carrying with them the comforts and luxuries of land-life,—nay, to not a few the ship-life is more abundant and luxurious than their home-life: many meals of many courses, games and amusements on deck, music and books in cabin, steam-heat and electric light, concerts, parlor-theatricals, lectures and recitations to fill up the long evenings;—and so all except the few sea-sick ones get into a matter-of-

## NOTABLE SERMONS

course, land-like, home-like way, and have their little frets, quarrels and politics, until, mayhap by a storm, or a collision, or a fire, or lightning, the sense is suddenly awakened: "We are afloat. This is a mere ship. It may sink. The caves below are deep and dark. The ship is in distress! They are clearing away the boats and provisioning them. We may have to leave the ship and go afloat." So there is alarm, perhaps a panic. Thus it is when great churches are caught in a place where two seas meet and get aground, the forepart stuck fast, immovable, the hinderpart broken by the violence of the waves. There will ever be more or less of confusion, doubt, and distress in that church; timid souls will suffer. Happy the church that has on board some bright-eyed apostle who can stand forth and testify: "There shall be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship."

Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe on God. Churches are very precious and comfortable devices and helps along the voyage of life. Doubtless it is in every way desirable to come on board at birth by baptism, to live enjoying the decent usages of piety and established religion, and when the time comes to go ashore by the appointed gangplank, while officers in uniform see us safely off, and wish us goodbye!

Still we shall live and learn somehow. We shall all get ashore some way. He who started us forth from the unknown awaits us in the unknown. Living or dying we are the Lord's.

## THE SHIPWRECK OF PAUL

4. Finally: the sorting out of the people and their several ways of getting to the land, as told us in the ship-wreck story, seem to me suggestive. Some could swim, and went overboard bravely, equal to the occasion. And there be in all ages sound and sober thinkers, long-visioned seers, illuminated men, to whom the world to come seems nearer and its land more solid than the tossing world that now is. Strong swimmers they. They call on God and go ashore.

Some escaped on planks. Such are the diligent, who all their voyage through have kept themselves in training by familiarity with the best thoughts and words, of the best men. Some vision of a poet comes to mind, some scrap of a simple hymn, some assurance of faith read long ago in a book or heard in a memorable sermon, some sound philosophy mastered until the studious soul is mastered by it and kept in composure! A sound way of thinking is a grand plank to seize and by its help to go ashore from restless society, or a shattered church.

Some escaped on pieces of the ship, the ship things, the hatch covers, the hen-coops, the cook's galley, spare spars, deck seats, chairs, and all the light stuff that floats when the ship breaks up. From all the old churches and societies that ever sailed and sank, have survived salutary usages and habits; and men this day are staying up by them. Often without knowing it, they are profiting by pieces of some old sunken ship or church. All, or nearly all, the sound morality of this present age, is a piece of some old church. The

*NOTABLE SERMONS*

finger of God has given commandments! And men are getting safely ashore on these pieces of God's church. If thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments!

The names of God, the ways of outcry and call upon him in time of extremity, the solemn rites which somehow comfort even the unbelieving in the hour of birth, marriage, and death, the refreshment of prayer; these all these, are blessed fragments of old ships which went to pieces, but these fragments still float, and men get safely to shore by their help.

Leaving unspoken far more than I have voiced, I hasten to make an end of words. It came to pass that they escaped all safely to land. What a ship-load! master and crew, and merchant super-cargo, centurion and soldiers, prisoners, Paul the apostle, and Luke the evangelist! Out on that ocean all boundless they rode, all Romeward bound!

Said I not well that this story told by Luke teaches like a parable, and shines like an allegory?







*“Father Tom”*

# The Greatest Miracle of History

*Preached in*

*The Park Church, Elmira, N. Y., Feb., 11, 1877*

*Austinburg, O., September 26, 1877*

*Wellsville, N. Y., June 24, 1877*

*Binghamton, N. Y.*

*New Bedford, Conn., October 30, 1877*

*Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, April 29, 1877*

*Newark Valley, N. Y., February 5, 1878*

*Milwaukee, Wis., June 16, 1878*

*Norwich, N. Y., 1879*

*Alfred Center, N. Y., May 15, 1880*

*Buffalo, N. Y., July 4, 1880*

*Washington, D. C. and Lincoln Hall, Dec. 26, 1880*

*Schenectady, N. Y., November 27, 1881*

*Reformatory, Elmira, N. Y., July 20, 1884*

*Hancock, N. Y., July 22, 1884*

*Bridgeport, Conn., August 19, 1888*

*West Warren, Pa., January 9, 1889*

*Cornell, Ithaca, N. Y., February 22, 1891*



Mr. Beecher, upon being requested to give an autograph sermon to a young friend, sent him this one with a letter, of which the following is a part:—

“I enclose with this the sermon above all sermons that I ever wrote in its origin and value.

“Feb. 11, '77, I was at eight A. M. in great travail of spirit, not having a message for the saints. In agony of prayer, I lifted my prostrate face, seized a pen, and wrote madly until ten-fifty.

“This sermon is what I wrote in those hours, a sermon that I received by the Holy Spirit.

“I give it to you. It has comforted and strengthened me, silenced doubts, quenched arrows all aflame with learned denials, again and again. The name and fame of Jesus the Christ needs no defenders. God himself perpetuates the story of his son our Lord.”



## THE GREATEST MIRACLE OF HISTORY

*Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name.—Phil. 2:9.*

“Name” means fame, reputation, glory, honor. When given by God himself, the fame or reputation is well-grounded; something more than notoriety or popularity,—a well-earned fame, deserving glory and honor. Says Paul, God has given to Jesus a name and fame world-wide, a name above all names.

This was and is a startling assertion. A certain wandering enthusiast whose name was Paul, wrote a short letter to a handful of mere nobodies who lived at Philippi eighteen hundred years ago. In that letter he said that for certain reasons God had highly exalted one Jesus and given him a name and fame above all other names known among men.

If we find that this most unlikely prediction has been conspicuously and continuously fulfilled, I reckon the prophecy and its fulfilment among history’s most marvelous facts. I speak this morning of the most enduring miracle that the world has ever seen; a marvel so great that its many-sided greatness makes delineation well-nigh impossible.

It is with it as with a mountain. The peasant who has his little cottage at its base has no conception of its majesty and uplift. If seen from afar, its soft outlines so mingle with the sky that we forget that it rests upon the earth.

## NOTABLE SERMONS

In like manner the marvel to which I call your attention is a mighty accumulation of details. If I speak of them one by one, we are like the peasant picking stones and planting vines and milking goats, unconscious of the mountain. If we look at my marvel from afar, we are in danger of forgetting the facts and stories by which it lifts up from earth to heaven. In other words if I give myself to historic detail of my miracle, we miss the mountainous whole. If I delineate the whole, the picture seems cloudy, fanciful, unreal. Nevertheless I make the attempt, assuming that some of you at least will be able to distribute into affluent details of familiar facts a statement requiring but ten seconds to make. I ask your attention to a simple story, which so far as I know is denied by no one.

Of obscure parents in an obscure village,—no one can tell just where for certain,—a babe, a boy, was born; by name Joshua or Jesus, a very common name. In another little village, infamous as well as obscure, one of many in a rude, illiterate province, this boy grew up, learning the trade of a carpenter.

By and by when he became a man, he passed his life in such a way that at his dying he left no visible token that he had ever lived; no sample of his handicraft that we know of; no house, if he ever owned or builded one; no scrap of writing if he ever wrote; no organized society or party; no portrait or children;—nothing whatever left.

Never did a famous man make more obscure en-

## *THE GREATEST MIRACLE OF HISTORY*

trance into life, or more disastrous exit; never did man so seem, as it were, to have evaporated, leaving no trace of himself anywhere upon earth, or among men.

I speak of Jesus the Christ, who was crucified, dead, and buried.

Shortly after his disappearance, the few men who had known him began to tell to crowds stories about him, astounding stories, incredible stories. They said that this obscure babe, born nobody knows when, was in fact a son of God and had no man for his father. To gathered strangers from all over the world, they said that this man who had been tried and put to death as a blasphemer outside the gates of Jerusalem, was in very deed the Christ of God for whom the ages had been waiting.

They spoke openly and boldly: "With wicked hands ye have killed him. But he will come again. God has set a day in which he will judge the world by that man." In proof of which they alleged that he had already risen from the dead. They said that they had seen him; and that he was caught up into heaven, and a cloud received him out of their sight.

And as they told these stories, oh, marvel of marvels! thousands of people believed them. Such astounding stories! Such offensive accusations! Such preposterous claims! Yet thousands believed, when to believe was very costly, all to lose and nothing to gain.

How do you account for it?

Reasonable, sensible men began to object to these

## NOTABLE SERMONS

stories and claims, nearly every objection which reasonable men use in this city today, priding themselves upon their non-belief in the Christian legends.

Risen from the dead?, you say. No, you've stolen his body, fixed up your story. It's all a put-up job.

Born of a virgin! No, no, she was but a wild Galilean maiden. You glorify and worship her natural son.

With wicked hands we crucified him? What higher court could have tried and condemned him? Your hero is a convicted betrayer of his people, and a blasphemer of his God.

He is coming again to judge the world? Pray where is the promise of his coming? All things continue as they were from the foundation of the world. "The uniformity of the operations of nature is the foundation of science."

He wrought great signs and wonders? He only juggled and fooled a few wide-eyed and open-mouthed common people. Did any of the rulers believe on him?

He raised the dead? You yourselves keep saying that he couldn't save himself. How then could he bring others to life? Self-preservation is nature's first law.

But despite these cavils and unanswerable objections to the marvelous stories, thousands believed.

How do you account for this?

Our text asserts that God hath given him a name and a reputation. Let him who cannot accept this, account for it in any other way if he can.

But let us go on with our story.

## THE GREATEST MIRACLE IN HISTORY

Very shortly they began to kill off the leaders of this new, strange faith. One deacon they stoned to death. An apostle they slew with the sword. But these thousands of timid men and women spoke out more and more boldly every day.

As burning shingles from a fire at midnight curl out of the heat and spin up the fiery pillars,—to dart off in the dark, and where they fall kindle a new burning, so these simple men and women, escaped from persecution's fires, were scattered throughout the world as then known. And where they stopped, as they told the wonderful stories of Jesus, a new fire started. Ahead of the apostles, and over regions that never enjoyed an apostolic visit, these singular zealots roamed, and men believed wherever the story was told.

In the heart of China are deserted and ruined temples signed with the cross and inscribed with Christian legends. Travelers that stab their way into Africa find church buildings, convents, and manuscripts that arrest the eyes of the learned all over the world. On both sides of the Mediterranean are yet to be found clear to the pillars of Hercules the traces of apostolic labor. All Europe has been overrun by the fame of this babe,

born of a virgin,  
dying in infamy,  
rising in mystery,  
ascending to glory.

Across the ocean came the story, (adulterated with

## NOTABLE SERMONS

greed and cruelties), and has overrun the Americas. The oldest monuments of modern civilization in South America are adobe churches and monasteries. The oldest settlements in North America, east coast, west coast, and along the great river, are scribed in their origins with this name of Jesus. He has a name and fame this day that is above every name.

How do you account for it?

The pressed and persecuted church disappeared from among men. She hid in caves and catacombs. She fled to the wilderness and solitary places.

By and by came a greater danger than persecution. The fragrance of Christian faith came floating up from the servants' quarters, and noble women began to believe. Noble men caught the story. An emperor heard it, believed and began to patronize the church!

Patronage is more dangerous to purity than persecution. To believe on Jesus Christ became a paying act. Ambitious men, military men, court climbers, began to make obeisances to the Church. Instead of faith toward God came pious Church-craft. Gold flowed into her treasuries. Heathen temples became churches. Heathen rites and festivals were rechristened in the name of Jesus. Basilicas remodeled and consecrated, were proud cathedrals, and kings kneeled to bishops to receive their crowns. Warriors all gory brought back booty, and compounded for slaughters by building churches and abbeys, prayer-places to the Prince of Peace!

## THE GREATEST MIRACLE OF HISTORY

The cross became an ornament for decoration, a golden finial for the architect, a jewel for the neck of beauty. Fugitive apostles and martyrs reappeared on canvas with the glory-hoops about their heads; their very bones were dug up and enshrined in gold. In short,—that mighty thing, an established church, grew up with a history and a tradition; with bishops, theologians, fathers, councils, decrees,—a mighty organization, filling the eye and arousing enthusiasms like the great image of gold that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

By and by, huge and top-heavy, this monstrosity tumbles and man goes free; when lo! from amid the ruins comes flowing forth the little silver stream:

Jesus, son of Mary and of God  
Jesus, lover of mankind  
Jesus, slain and first to rise  
Jesus, judge and savior  
Jesus Christ is coming, coming!

As the ages have gone by, metaphysicians have split hairs to define and class him properly. In his name, theologians have dogmatized, and the next generation has called them babblers. In his name and for his glory, bishops have wrangled for their chairs, and torn robes in the councils of the Church. In his name armies have crashed together bloodily in the old days of sword and spear, grimy and thundrous in modern warfare.

Because of him, statesmen and diplomats are this hour toiling at that great eastern question, the roots

### NOTABLE SERMONS

of which strike into religion. In his name and for his glory, painters, sculptors, architects, and poets, have wrought their highest works, unapproachable by their followers today. Also at this very time 1900 years after the birth of this obscure babe, the commercial world dates its papers, emperors their decrees, and legislatures their laws, Anno Domini 1877. And of all topics discussed in this day of universal ferment and countless books, tracts, and papers; more essays, more sermons, more speeches, more study, and more scholarship are lavished upon the name and fame of Jesus than upon any other topic that you can suggest.

How do you account for it?

To go back to the beginning of my sermon:—  
1840 years ago, long before these things had come to pass, a restless zealot, Paul by name, wrote to a handful of obscure religionists, that the same mind ought to be in them that was in Christ Jesus,

Who was in form God; equal with God:

But he emptied himself and was found a man:

He went down further and became a servant:

He died on the cross:

Wherefore, he adds, God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name.

What a prophecy! You are witnesses to its fulfillment. God hath cared for the reputation of Jesus his Christ. God, in whose hands are the hearts of men, hath by his spirit taught and led men of all degrees to believe.

Say not in thy timid spirit, oh, trembling church-

## *THE GREATEST MIRACLE OF HISTORY*

member, that we have fallen on evil times of scepticism! Churches are deserted and strong men make light of religion! Jesus the Christ of God does not lose or win his empire according to the many or few who fill our meeting-houses or pay pew-rents.

“Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? Behold I, even I, have set my king in Zion. Hear the decree: I will give you the nations for an inheritance and the uttermost parts of the world for a possession.”

I speak to you, I said, of what seems to me the greatest marvel, the most stupendous miracle that the world ever saw, the preserved name and fame of Jesus Christ. It has outlived the assaults of enemies, it survives the fond and feeble apologies of friends. The eternal God has watched over the reputation of his beloved son. Paul said he would. We see that he has.

Do not, I pray you, slip off into the shallowness of comparative religions, and take up the cant of the learned patrons of all religions. Do not fall to talking about Sakya Muni, Socrates, Confucius, Zoroaster, Moses, and Jesus, as religious geniuses to whom the world is indebted. Remember that for more than fifty years Buddha lived and taught, Jesus but three. Buddha left a small army of trained disciples and missionaries. There is nothing marvelous about the rise and spread of his doctrines, which are indeed in many particulars so exalted and like the teachings of Jesus that the Church of Rome has inadvertently made a saint of him. But there is no rally round his person,

## NOTABLE SERMONS

no pretence made by any of his millions that they receive daily life by gift from him.

And Socrates! Why, the world of critics divide in opinion whether Socrates be not after all a mere dummy through whom Plato speaks, a lay-figure used by Plato to display his refined and far-reaching philosophy.

And Mohammed! I detect nothing marvelous in the rise and spread of Mohammedanism. The sword in the hands of zealots will make converts by the million.

More than all I see that these great world religions wax old and dry, and nothing grows from their roots. But the faith of Jesus Christ seems somehow like a root-sprout out of dry ground.

Yes, yes, churches grow, organize, extend, get rich, respectable, and all that. But up rises anywhere a man of sincerity and tells the story of Jesus, and in every city believers are multiplied. And this zealous and successful evangelist is wisest and most successful because he has nothing to say about church, but with singleness of mind preaches the old, old story.

Yet of all the incredible stories ever told by man to man, of all the myths and traditions ever handed down from the venerable past, none is in its terms more incredible than this same story which the mightiest as well as the feeblest of men have believed with rapture, unto a life of righteousness and hope, and an exultant dying. Not one great witness, as the world reckons greatness could or did testify, not a

## *THE GREATEST MIRACLE OF HISTORY*

priest, not a governor, not a line of writing. All, all has been swept into oblivion, save only the hero and his fame, this God and his worship.

Like the majesty of the mountain that the sailor sees from afar, its broad foundations asking no leave to be, its uplift blending with the clouds and sharing with them the transfiguring glories of morning and evening: so the name and fame and fact of Jesus the Christ is broadly based upon twenty centuries. It asks no leave to be. And from far away, the sailor on life's ocean, tired of tossing and weary of laborious computations and watchings, when he catches the vision of Jesus the Christ, lifted up to draw all men unto him, knows then his place and his destiny: "I believe on Jesus Christ. There where he is, is my fatherland, there my home." God was in Christ, reconciling the world.

Look! Look! Look! Learn of him. Let his mind be in you, your feet in his foot-prints. Deny yourself. Take up your daily cross, and follow him. Say in your soul: I believe on Jesus Christ, Son of God and Savior of Man, and receive the Holy Ghost unto life.





The following sermons have been asked for, but could not be printed in this volume:

The Valley of Baca.

Our Value to God.

What is the New Testament?

David.

Faith.

Death.

If a man die, shall he live again?

It doth not yet appear what we shall be.

The Resurrection.

God will have all men to be saved.

Thanksgiving.

I have fought a good fight.

The fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man.

Dr. Wales had in his possession, with a view to publication, a collection of prayers by Mr. Beecher. It may be that in another year, if there be a sufficient desire for it, a selection from the above-named sermons and these prayers will be embodied in another volume, uniform with this. Dr. Booth will contribute a chapter on "An unknown side of Mr. Beecher," showing the unique work Mr. Beecher did for a class of boys and what he has meant to them in their lives. There will be some illustrations selected from the following subjects: Mr. Beecher at his study desk; the Beecher family; Mr. Beecher at seventeen; Mr. Beecher at seventy; the choir in the old Park Church: Park Church today.

Some of the sermons mentioned above are missing. If any persons have copies of them, will they kindly inform Miss Frances Farrar, Beecher Cottage, East Hill, Elmira, N. Y.? Miss Farrar would also be glad to hear whether another volume would meet the hearty interest and support that have been the underpinning of the present one. The two volumes, together with "In Time with the Stars," and "Our Seven Churches," already published, would give quite a complete rendering of Mr. Beecher's message.



